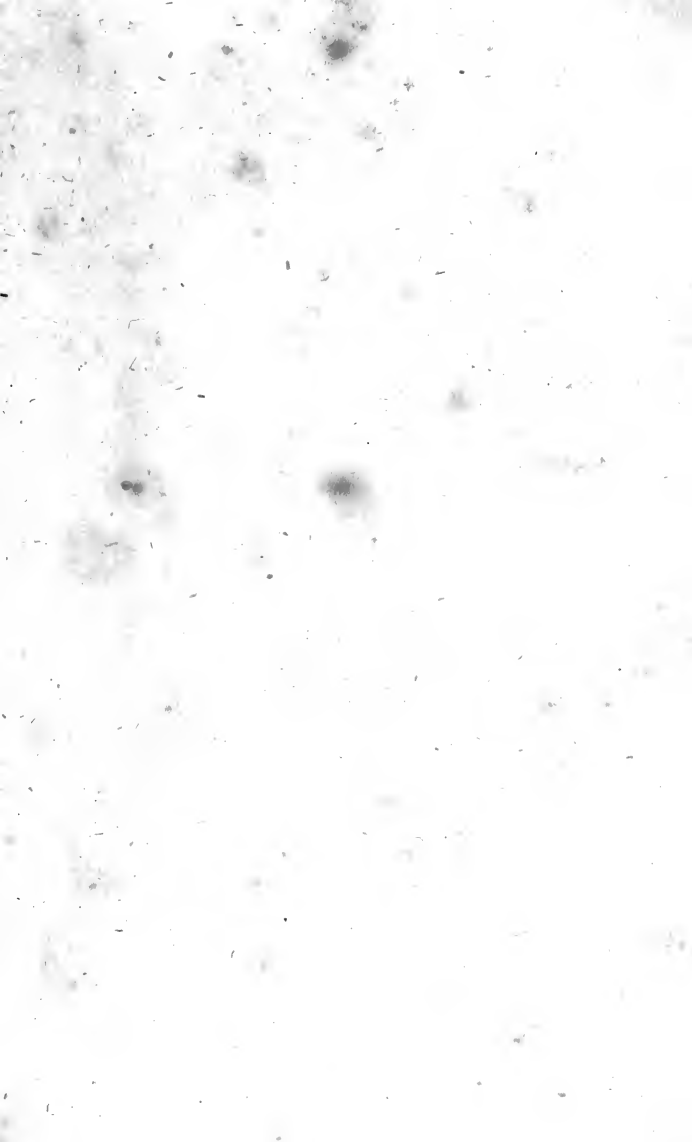
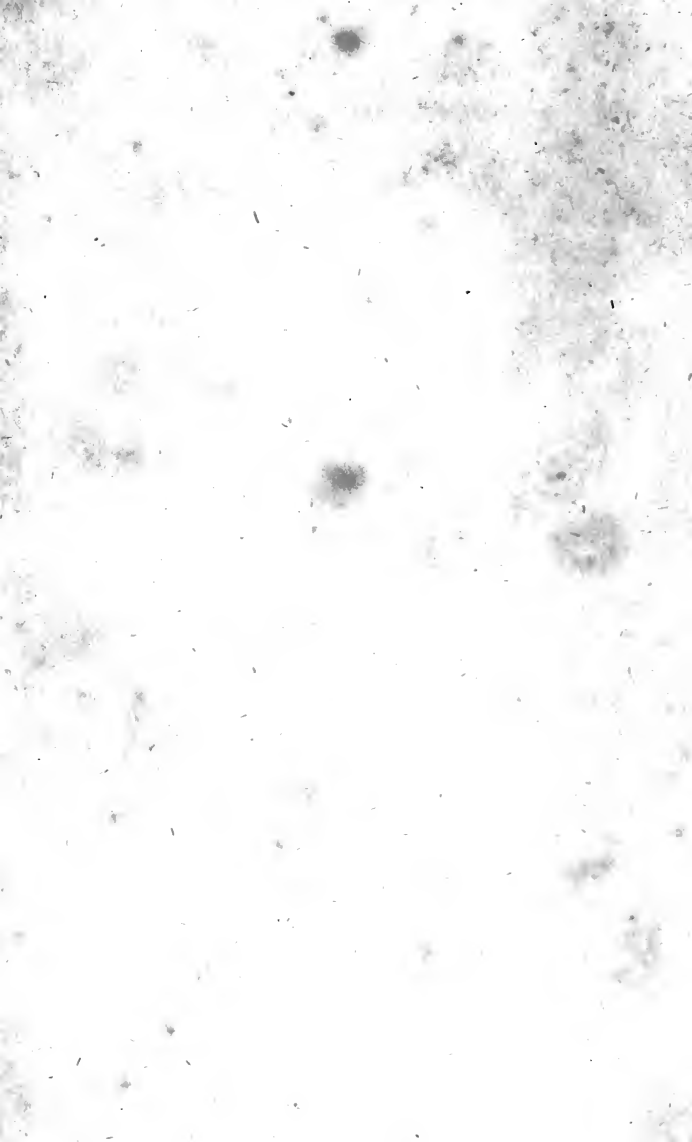




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THE
SOLDIER'S FAMILY;

OR,
GUARDIAN GENII.

A ROMANCE.
IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY ANNE ORMSBY,
AUTHOR OF MEMOIRS OF A FAMILY IN SWISSERLAND.

VOL. II.

“ Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

ST. MATTHEW V. 48.

LONDON:

Printed by J. G. Barnard, Snow-hill,

FOR B. CROSBY AND CO. STATIONERS'-COURT,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1807.



THE
SOLDIER'S FAMILY;

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GUARDIAN GENII.

CHAP. I.

"Innocence and virtue alone may constitute beauty ; but vice, under every exterior, must be odious."

AS Lady Castlekerry wished her young novice in pleasure to be present at the first act of the opera, tea was served at an early hour ; and the carriage having been ordered at seven, the Hibernian party repaired to the Haymarket.

On entering the theatre, Erina was struck with delight by the scene of gaiety, which to her had all the charms of novelty. The overture to the piece was grand ; and as she had seldom heard a

full band, the music inspired her ardent feelings almost with ecstasy, which the arrival of the viscountess and Rosaline increased.

That lovely girl, like her friend, was dressed with elegant plainness. Some roses in her bosom were the only adornments she had added to a muslin gown, tied round her slender waist with a sash of pink riband.

Erina, who always delighted in the beauty and elegance of her friend, complimented her on the becoming grace of her dress ; and admiring the roses as the most lovely production of Flora's care, Rosaline immediately divided her nosegay with Erina, assuring her, that she had daily watered the tree that bore those flowers, in order to have the pleasure of presenting them, as she now did, as an offering and emblem of friendship.

Erina, smiling, took the roses, and putting them to her lips, in token of gratitude for an attention so sweetly expressive of the sentimental bonds that united their hearts in sacred amity, she kissed the flowers, because they had been cultivated by Rosaline, and placed them in her breast, saying, with graceful vivacity, " These roses are inexpressibly dear to me, since they are the em-

blem of our friendship, and also of my amiable Rosaline."

As Erina spoke, a tear of sensibility sparkled in her eyes, and one of her sweetest smiles dimpled round her coral lips, and made her seem like celestial sentiment embodied in an angel's form. Absorbed by the powerful feelings of her soul, she forgot, for an instant, every thing but her being in the society of her amiable, her first, her dearest friend; until Rosaline whispered in her ear, in a tone of pleasantry, that the *Grand Seignior*, or the *Great Mogul*, was in the second box from theirs, and that his imperial majesty was gazing at her with rivetted attention. "Do look at him!" cried Rosaline, with earnestness: "Upon my honour he is the most splendid and the handsomest creature that fancy could pourtray; he is certainly superior to the human race, and must be a fairy prince, or some great enchanter, or one of the good genii whom one reads of in the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*."

Erina laughed at this fanciful speech of Rosaline, and imagining it to be one of her friend's lively sallies, and a droll remark on some comical fop of fashion, who had laid aside the unaffected and plain exterior of an Englishman, to ape fo-

reign dress and manners, which generally render honest Mr. *John Bull* extremely ridiculous, she would not direct her eyes to the box pointed out by Rosaline, for fear of encountering the impertinent stare of some coxcomb: but seeing her friend still in attentive observance of the sight, to which she again directed, with serious entreaty, the eyes of the party in Lady Castlekerry's box, Erina looked up, and was instantly struck with delighted astonishment at the view of a figure equally new, splendid, and admirable!

An incomparably handsome form of a youth, above the stature generally denominated tall, was standing, in an elegant attitude, in a box so situated as to afford Erina almost a whole-length view of the figure and habit that attracted her wonder and admiration. Her nearness to him (as they were each in the front seat of their respective box, with only one intervening in the bend of the theatre) and a lustre exactly placed so as to throw a full glære of light upon his face and person, gave her an opportunity of observing both with accuracy. Although his costume was eastern, his complexion was ruddy, and so fair as scarcely to admit the denomination of brown, had not his eyebrows and mustachios, of the darkest colour, given a shade to his countenance.

His eyes were large, black, and piercing; his mouth and teeth uncommonly beautiful; and the outline of his profile, and the contour of his face and neck, were perfectly Grecian, and were shewn to the utmost advantage by the form of his turban and vest: the first was composed of soft fine muslin, wrapped round his head in folds and twists, disposed in a light, tasteful, and becoming manner. A kind of diadem, or band of jewels, glittered on his forehead, passing diagonally across his left temple, and the other was also partly concealed by the white swathes of his turban. A vest of royal purple velvet, richly embroidered in gold, buttoned close to his form with two rows of brilliant studs over his left breast, and clasped round his neck with a diamond ornament, entirely exposing his throat, which was long, and gave him the air of a beautiful bust after the antique manner. A band of gold tissue encompassed his waist; and the ends of his sash, embossed with foil of various colours, and terminated by a fringe of pearls, hung pendant to his knees from his right side, where it was curiously attached: in this band a large poniard, decorated superbly with gems, sparkled with varying lustre. His vest descended nearly to his knees, beneath which he appeared to have drawers of yellow satin; but

this part of his dress was concealed from Erina's view, as he stood rather close to the front of the box, over which hung a long shawl of the most delicate whiteness and texture.

The first glance Erina cast at this handsome stranger, her admiring looks encountered his rivetted on her ; and as they both continued to gaze from an evident reciprocally fascinating power, Erina experienced an indefinable sensation of the most agreeable emotion, which fixed her eyes on his : in their strong expression, her genius deciphered that his was transcendent ; she read in the bright beams of his quick glances a soul of fire, and in the kindling glow of his cheeks a heart replete with sentiment.

“ Who can this handsome young foreigner be ? ” cried Erina, in a low voice ; looking for information at Lady Castlekerry and the viscountess, who had insisted on placing the two girls in the front seats, that they might have an uninterrupted sight of the stage.

The two matrons being equally at a loss as the maiden beauties in their conjectures respecting the uncommon object who seemed to have excited the wonder and admiration of the whol

house, applied to O'Brien for his surmises relative to the handsome foreigner.

Charles, whose station was behind the ladies, had scarcely got a sight of the "beautiful phenomenon," as Erina sportively called the stranger: recollecting, however, that Lady Engleton's box must be in the vicinity of that in which he sat, he was unwilling to come forward, as Rosaline and his sister pressed him, to view the uncommon exhibition, lest, in seeking a sight of it, he might unluckily encounter the regards of a woman, whose recollection awakened in him a disgust bordering on abhorrence, and an interview with whom he dreaded as he would assassination.

"Do you not think, Rosaline," demanded Erina gaily, "that my brother is unusually stupid, and excessively ill natured to night?"

Rosaline smiled, and again invited O'Brien to peep over their shoulders into the second box from theirs, that he might see the stranger, and give an opinion relative to his country and rank; "which," she said, "she was dying with impatience to learn."

"To avoid the imputation of ill nature, which

I detest," said O'Brien, laughing, " I will incur the risk of appearing rude and impertinent, by staring at the object of your curiosity as if he were some monster." Saying this, he leaned forward, and caught a glance of Lady Engleton : she was sitting with her back towards their box, whilst she was conversing with her beau, who proved to be the young foreigner of whom O'Brien had heard so many praises. The sight of that woman, whose abandoned morals had so offended the delicacy of Charles's principles, made him involuntarily start back with horror, so that he had but an instantaneous view of the stranger : however, even from this cursory glance, O'Brien saw enough to satisfy him, that the wonder and admiration of Rosaline and Erina were neither exaggerated in their energetic expression, nor misplaced in their object, whom he confessed to be astonishingly handsome ; adding, that from the magnificence and manner of the foreigner's dress, it was probable he was an Eastern prince.

Although the opera was splendid, and extremely interesting to Erina, as she understood Italian and music sufficiently to enter into the beauty of the composition, and possessed a delicacy of taste and feeling that made her sensible of the

merits of its performance, yet her attention was divided between the stage and the effects of the piece, on the stranger.

His eyes frequently strayed from the actors to contemplate Erina, whose modest glances often met his penetrating regards.

She occasionally addressed some remarks to Rosaline; and, at times, was employed in silent observation of the vocal powers of the first singer, who instructed her in singing; and she was eager to learn, from his exertions on the scene, that just expression and exquisite taste her ready genius had the talent of appropriating instantly as her own, both from science and another's execution.

Rosaline was delighted by the music, still more by the *ballet*; for dancing was her favourite accomplishment, and that in which she was pre-eminent.

At the conclusion of the entertainment Erina observed the stranger throw his shawl across his breast, and, with an easy and inimitable grace, winding the soft drapery round him like a scarf,

he flung one end of it over his shoulder, rendering it a most picturesque addition to his dress ; which altogether was superb, elegant, and the most becoming attire, that any painter could have contrived, or that any poet could have imagined, to grace a youthful sultan, seated on an imperial throne. With an air of regal dignity the youth bent towards the lady on whom he waited, and, with courtly state, he attended her out of the box, casting a lingering look of regret at Erina as she watched his departure.

O'Brien now offered his hand to the viscountess, at Lady Castlereagh's desire ; and Madame de Briançon, and her Hibernian beau, advanced towards the coffee-room.

The Irish countess taking one of the young beauties on each side of her, with some pleasantries remarked, that she had made a good exchange by assuming angels for her supporters instead of savages. The lively Rosaline and Erina laughed : the latter complimented her ladyship on the elegant turn of her *bon mot* ; and Rosaline said, she hoped she should profit considerably by the honour of Lady Castlekerry's acquaintance, and learn, in her agreeable society, to shine as a *bel esprit* in France, and in the company of that

nation, who boast superior wit, prove the pretensions of Britons to that entertaining talent.

“In addition to the proofs you will doubtless afford the French of British wit,” cried Erina, “you will certainly, my dear Rosaline, convince them also, that politeness is likewise of English growth.”

On entering the coffee-room, the first sight that struck Erina was the interesting foreigner. He was standing near the door; and the crowd preventing the ingress of Lady Castlekerry's party into the apartment, Erina found herself stationed close to the object of her curiosity and admiration.

She had now an opportunity of considering him attentively; and to observe, that buskins of scarlet cloth, embossed with gold and foils, completed his magnificently elegant and picturesque habit. Surrounding and crowding on him, stood several parties of English gentlemen, above whom his stature towered majestic in height, and ennobled by an air which united courtesy with the deportment of a prince. O'Brien alone could be compared with him in beauty, stature, dignity, and grace; yet Erina, with wonder, saw her bro-

ther, whom she had believed unequalled in countenance, figure, and elegance, surpassed, in her opinion, by the matchless handsomely and superlatively graceful youth; who, to all the charms of a manly face and an athletic form, added the bloom of boyhood, appearing scarcely eighteen.

Erina now heard him address two ladies whom he had attended in their box, and was surprised to hear the young foreigner speak the language of England almost like a native. In listening to his discourse she found his pronunciation elegant, his speech grammatically correct, and his accent unusually harmonious: his sentences were strong, his style energetic; while a redundant flow of words, epithets uncommonly yet aptly applied, and a striking imagery in his conversation, marked him as a being of superior genius, that could adapt itself to the investigation of abstruse science, possessing a powerful intellect for reasoning, united to all the vivacity of the most brilliant imagination. His observations on all he saw evinced the strongest judgment and the most refined taste. Some of the gentlemen now accosting the ladies to whom he had been speaking, addressed him with questions respecting the opera; which he criticised with an intelligence that shewed him to be an exquisite judge of poetry, and a proficient in Italian.

One of the gentlemen expressing some surprise at his knowledge of a language that might be presumed not understood in the country whence his highness came ; the latter replied, that although Italian was not a language cultivated at all by the natives of India, yet he had, on his arrival in England, acquired it with extreme facility, from its resemblance to the Spanish, which was to him perfectly familiar, as the princess, his mother, was a Spaniard.

Erina thought herself extremely fortunate thus to have gained so much intelligence respecting the foreigner who had been so much the object of her curiosity. The princely dignity, which she had now ascertained to be his rank, did not exalt him higher above those surrounding him, than his superior figure and elevated sentiments.

The vicinity of Lady Castlekerry and the two young beauties to the Asiatic prince, prevented their making him the subject of their conversation.

Erina was unwilling to quit so favourable a station for seeing and hearing a being to her equally novel and interesting ; yet she was anxious that her brother (who had pushed his way through the crowd to avoid Lady Engleton) should approach

to get a near view of a sight so uncommon in the countries of Europe; and stepping forward a few paces, she beckoned Charles towards her through the throng, ignorant of his reasons for flying the lady whom the prince attended; as the retirement in which Mrs. O'Brien lived since her arrival in London, had prevented her introduction to Lady Engleton, with whom Erina was acquainted merely by name.

As that lady never had seen the Hibernian beauty, and this was her first exhibition in public, the prince could gain no information respecting her, either from Lady Engleton or the gentlemen of her acquaintance, of whom he made innumerable enquiries. The vain peeress, piqued at the extraordinary admiration Erina excited, stared at her with a malevolent effrontery that distressed the timid girl; who, perceiving herself an object of universal observation, felt herself abashed, and, blushing deeply, bloomed with increased loveliness.

A nobleman, distinguished by a star, advanced towards Lady Engleton, and, in an audible whisper, demanded of her ladyship if she could inform him who those two divine creatures were that had illumined the theatre with their beauty that night,

and set the circle of fashion in a flame by the blaze of unequalled charms. The enquirer served in this the treble purpose of gratifying his curiosity, conceit, and malice. Being a quondam gallant of Lady Engleton, whom she had just cast off because a higher and more splendid conquest came in view, he was determined to shew her conceited ladyship she was completely eclipsed, in his admiration, by new objects, which he knew would mortify her vanity. He was not more anxious to effect this than to impress those objects of his present curiosity with an idea of his superior qualities; and in order to attract their attention and fix their favourable opinion by proving himself a man of the first fashion, he thus continued his address to Lady Engleton: "Upon my soul, they are by far the most beautiful creatures that ever were seen; and if it were not cursedly out of fashion to fall in love, by all that's charming I should be over head and ears! Wouldn't that be famous?"

! "Egad, it would be rare fun, my Lord!" cried one of the fashionable bucks that composed the *suite* of Lady Engleton; who, with a toss of her head, and an air of indifference, said to the latter, without deigning a look at his lordship, "Don't mind a word Lord William utters; it is a noto-

rious fact, that he is a discarded *enamorado*, and has no heart to offer." A loud laugh, and an impudent glance of meaning, pointed the application of her speech to her own late sway over her discarded lover ; from whom a contemptuous look contradicted the assertion, while he said, " By heavens that's a good one ! One mustn't give a lady the lie ;" cried the knight of the star, winking significantly at the buck ; who ejaculated, " Rat me if I don't smoke the joke ! a famous quiz on both sides, and well played off, by all that's good ! Your ladyship means to insinuate that his lordship is so unfashionable as to have sentiment, whilst he endeavours to disclaim all contamination of such a horribly vulgar vice."

Erina, quite disgusted by this nonsensical jargon of fashionable wit, which is mere folly and vulgar absurdity, and modern manners, which consist in impudence, blushed and turned away her face from the impertinent glances of Lady Engleton, the fixed and sickening adulatory gaze of the starred man of fashion, and the rude stare of the young buck, who, to gain consequence in the *haut ton*, had been obliged to lay aside, in his intercourse with the great world, all politeness, which fashionable life had taught him to consider as low breeding.

In averting her regards from this group, which the young Asiatic prince had quitted to accost a gentleman who carried in his appearance and demeanour the marks of true nobility, Erina again encountered the looks of the exalted stranger rivetted on her. There was, however, so much respect and sentiment in his regards, that her modesty felt itself rather flattered than offended by an attention that evinced admiration united with delight and judgment.

The crowd now increasing by the entrance of more company into the coffee-room, a party brushed past Erina, pushing her forward, so that the elbow of the gentleman who was conversing with the prince, swept the roses from her bosom ; and she involuntarily ejaculated, " Oh, Rosaline ! I have unfortunately lost the offering of your affection ! Those roses, so dear to me, have fallen ; and instead of being preserved, as I had intended, are trampled under foot."

While she was yet speaking to her fair friend she saw the flowers lifted from the floor by the prince. Approaching her with a majestic step, he bent forward with an air of dignified courtesy, and in that attitude of obeisance he raised the roses to his bosom, touching which and his forehead

with inimitable grace, he presented the flowers to Erina. She took her beloved roses with a blushing smile; and with eager haste was replacing them in her breast, when she heard the young prince soliciting her for one of the flowers he had restored to her. This request was so humble, so gently and engagingly made, and his claim to such a trivial favour from her seemed so just, that she instantly resolved to grant the trifling boon solicited; and selecting the most beautiful rose from those in her bosom, she gracefully presented it to the prince, who, with his former obeisance, touched his forehead with the gift, then carrying it to his breast, deposited it in the folding of his vest, and silently bowing as before, retreated; whilst Erina returned his salutation with a modest grace, that, to a soul of sentiment, declared the warmest benevolence of mind, united with perfect innocence of unstudied manner, and the chastest purity of thought.

Lady Engleton, who kept the prince in view, and had witnessed his gallantry to the young beauty of whom she felt malevolently jealous, was determined no longer to stand a comparison by which envy whispered her she was a considerable loser; and approaching his highness, she told him, that her carriage was in waiting. He bowed a

dignified obedience to her ladyship's summons; then shaking the gentleman with whom he had been conversing cordially by the hand, he made his Eastern peculiarly elegant salute to Erina, and departed from the coffee-room, followed by the gaze of every person he passed.

In a short time O'Brien, perceiving that Lady Engleton had withdrawn, came up to Lady Castlekerry; who, feeling rather impatient to quit the crowded and heated room, dispatched her young beau in search of the carriages; and he immediately returned, with the information that her ladyship's coach and Madame de Briangon's were in waiting.

Lady Castlekerry being the conductor of the party, desired O'Brien to hand the viscountess in first, saying, she would take care of her young charges; and in the order this little company had entered the coffee-room they left it, and proceeded towards the door of the opera-house. An amazing crowd, however, pressed upon them in such a manner, that their progress was impeded; and the party found themselves again near the Eastern prince.

As Erina approached, his countenance bright-

ened, and as the throng pressed her near him, a charming smile beaming in his eyes seemed to bid the kindest welcome to the blooming beauties. For a moment Rosaline was obliged to crowd on lady Engleton, and the blushing Erina was compelled to take a stand of safety close to the prince. The narrowness of the passage, and the confusion of the multitude, had forced Lady Castlekerry from Erina ; and a young buck of fashion, linking a lobby-lounger by the arm, came up to the timid girl, ogling her so insolently through their glasses that she felt herself equally terrified and disgusted. Neither the chaste modesty of her demeanour, the deep blush of confusion that crimsoned her glowing cheeks, nor the averted glances of her downcast eyes, were sufficient to shield her from the impudent stare of the two young Englishmen ; who, attracted by virgin delicacy and beauty, were emboldened by it rather than repulsed ; and encouraging each other, by a half whisper and a loud laugh, to “ *hoax* the shy damsel,” they were about to address Erina, when the prince boldly stepped forward, and stretching forth his arm with an air of majesty to guard her, silently declared himself the protector of insulted innocence. The awful expression of his countenance, as he glanced an appalling look at the youths, repressed their insolence, and they with-

drew ; whilst Erina bestowed a salute of gratitude on her champion, tacitly thanked him, with a blushing smile, which the kindling glow on his cheek declared had overpaid his services.

The repeated vociferation of “ Lady Castlekerry’s carriage stops the way !” brought O’Brien in haste from conducting Madame de Briançon and Rosaline to their coach, to seek his sister and her *chaperon*, whom timidity had prevented from pushing their way through the mob. Catching a glance of Lady Engleton stationed near Erina, and looking on her with an insulting effrontery, O’Brien’s lofty spirit fired his eyes, and spread the glow of wounded delicacy over his animated features, as, in reply to Lady Castlekerry’s demand about the viscountess, her Hibernian squire said, he had seen both Madame de Briançon and Rosaline safe to their carriage.

O’Brien kept his eyes averted from Lady Engleton, who glowed vermilion through the deep tint of carmine on her face, where anger and mortification depicted the envenomed rage of a fury, as her late intended prey, now hated as he had been formerly adored, triumphantly handed Lady Castlekerry and the beauteous Erina from her presence ; while her consciousness of depra-

vity read in the looks of O'Brien towards herself, contempt mingled with abhorrence.

The countenance of Lady Engleton had made a strong impression on Erina ; who, as soon as she was seated in the carriage, said to her friend, the Irish countess, " How handsome, and yet how disagreeable in her appearance, is that lady near whom we stood in the lobby !"

Lady Castlekerry, being unacquainted with her personally, had not observed the lady Erina alluded to ; but Charles, on whom the expression of Lady Engleton's infamy and malevolence had made a powerful impression, cried, "*Innocence and virtue alone may constitute beauty ; but vice, under every exterior, must be odious.*"

CHAP. II.

“ The first, the last, and the greatest grief of life is a separation from those we love : but Heaven ordains it ; and mortals should not murmur at the laws of Providence ; which render this world a scene of trial, of happiness mixed with sufferings : but in every sorrow the pious christian has this comfort, that shines through affliction’s gloom, as a brilliant constellation shoots sparkles through the darkness of night ;—that comfort is, to fix the eye of faith on Heaven’s mercy, and see beatitude, in the perpetual enjoyment of the presence of sainted kindred spirits and the Divine Essence, irradiate eternity with celestial glory.”

LADY Castlekerry set her young friends down in Albemarle-street, and Erina found her mother sitting up to welcome her home, impatient for the return of her daughter, and anxious to hear an account of her evening’s entertainment.

Erina was equally impatient to behold her parent, and eager to give her information of every thing that had struck her on this first entrance

into the gay scene of a London public place. Her first attention, however, was directed towards her mother's health, which she was apprehensive might be endangered by the unusual fatigue of staying up to such a late hour ; and it was not until Mrs. O'Brien had assured her children that she felt extremely well, and in uncommon good spirits, that Erina's were sufficiently tranquillized to admit of her commencing the relation of all she had seen at the opera. She spoke of the composition and performance of the piece with enthusiasm ; and mentioned every circumstance respecting the Asiatic prince in terms of such eulogium, as evinced that her admiration of his superior figure, and uncommonly elegant and splendid dress, was not greater than her admiration of his understanding, and the refinement of his feelings. Of his exquisite sensibility, and his powerful intellects, she had seen the most convincing proofs in the strong and varying expression of his fine countenance, had not his conversation confirmed, past every possibility of dispute, that his mind was replete with intelligence and taste ; and had not his delicate and elegant attentions to Erina assured her that his soul was full of sensibility, she must have observed it in the glances of his beaming eyes, in the glowing lustre of his complexion, and in every air and move-

ment, which testified the union of grace and sentiment.

The moment Erina retired to her chamber, she put her roses in a vase of water, concerned to perceive that their fresh bloom was withered. After the performance of her orisons, in which no earthly thought destroyed their purity and fervour, she resigned her composed soul to repose; and visions, bright as her youthful fancy, retraced, in happy dreams, the scene of her evening enjoyment.

On the following dawn, Erina, gay and blooming, rose from the peaceful pillow of innocence, and pursued her daily business. After endeavouring to refresh the drooping flowers, which recalled to her delighted mind the friendship of Rosaline, and the gallantry of the splendid youth, to whom she was indebted for the recovery of her dearest friend's gift.

According to the daily custom, which had rendered her such a proficient in music, Erina tuned her harp and played for an hour; during which she felt peculiarly inspired to give and feel all the powers of harmony; and she would have been induced to afford more time to her morning

practice had she not resolved to adhere strictly to those rules she had prescribed to herself, of allotting particular hours to her various employments, by which means all her moments were occupied in a varying course of study, that change prevented from wearying, and regularity rendered most effectually improving.

The hours of morning retirement Erina had judiciously destined to the perusal of books which require uninterrupted attention; and she read, as usual, French and Italian authors, till summoned to breakfast. The happy family now assembled, enjoyed domestic comfort in the intercourse of soul and mutual confidence, which draws the cords of consanguinity close, and unites with indissoluble bonds the several relations of life in most accordant, most delightful amity. The venerable grandsire and his offspring, the mother and her children, and the brother and sister, mutually endeared, looked around with pleasure; and each, in the other's smile, felt the perfection of human felicity without any alloy, except that inseparable from the mortal state, which ordains that dearest friends must part.

This painful idea, in its fullest force, drew a deep sigh from O'Brien, at the obtruding thought,

that a few weeks would separate him from the present endearing circle, which, as yet, he had never quitted ; and the prospect of so shortly leaving it for months, perhaps for years, possibly for ever, suddenly checked his accustomed gaiety, and his usually mirthful smile gave place to seriousness, that suffused his eyes with tears ; as a passing cloud, at times, obscures the sun-beams, casting a gloomy shade over nature's face, and falls in showers. Charles could with difficulty restrain his tears, when a note from Colonel Herbert gave a motion to his sinking spirits, and renovated them to exertion.

He expected to find in the note an order to join his regiment ; and as he broke the seal he felt perturbed, reflecting, that our most ardent wishes, in their completion, often give us pain. " I have desired employment," thought O'Brien, " and to devote myself to the service of my king and country, why then should I feel reluctant to perform the duty in which I have joyfully engaged ? Every man is called upon to serve the community of which he is a member ; and the claims of society and of affection to our nearest relations, can only be performed by activity and devotion to our duties, that unite in one great scheme our private and public, our worldly and religious

obligations. This conviction had prepared the young soldier to attend, with alacrity, the professional summons expected ; and he had resolved to depart with concealed reluctance. This purpose had fortified his spirits ; and perusing the note from his colonel, he found an invitation to dinner on the morrow, instead of an order to leave London for country quarters.

A sensation of pleasing expectation exhilarated O'Brien as he wrote an acceptance of this invitation ; for although he did not flatter himself with an idea of meeting his beautiful *incognita*, he imagined something might proceed from Colonel Herbert, that would lead to the discovery of the lovely girl's relationship either to him or Wilmot. Independent of this, O'Brien experienced pleasure in the anticipation of revisiting the house where the enchanting vision had blessed his sight ; and the idea of spending some hours in the society of his generous and agreeable patron, who had been the associate of his late father, who was the friend of Wilmot, and who appeared to have a near interest in the object of his curiosity and admiration, gave the ardent and enthusiastic Charles innumerable sensations, none can feel unless possessed of the keen sensibility which added value to his rare character, as the

exquisite water of a diamond increases its brilliancy and estimation.

Elated with the prospect of the following day, O'Brien spent the present one in happiness : and on the day of his engagement, he repaired to Brook-street in uncommon spirits.

His colonel received him with cordial politeness, and introduced him to several of the officers of his regiment : they were all men of agreeable exterior and address ; but Captain Bernard's countenance and manner had something peculiarly engaging in Charles's opinion, whose ardent fancy was ever busy in reading character in new faces. He was not a professed physiognomist, nor did he study physiognomy by rule, as a science which the school of Lavater think unerring. O'Brien was a physiognomist from feeling rather than system. Nature had endued him with quick perception and acute sensibility ; his penetration was keen, and he was an enthusiast by constitution : but sensible of this quality in his disposition, which might be apt to mislead judgment, it had been the business of his life to cultivate his understanding so as to search for truth, and seize and acknowledge it, although in opposition to any opinion he had hastily conceived ; and according to

this system, he invariably scrutinized every impression he received, never trusting to prepossession ; and thus preserving himself from the most common and most fatal error of the human mind, which is prejudice, that often stamps falsehood with the effigy of truth, and renders illusion current, as counterfeit coin, for the deception and loss of the ignorant and unwary.

Although O'Brien had been educated at home, and had lived in a situation which might be denominated retirement, he had acquired almost universal knowledge, and had read too much to believe human nature as perfect as the rectitude of his heart could have led him to imagine or hope. He was acquainted with all the lessons prudence can inculcate as a guard against deceptious appearances ; and although he knew, from his extensive acquaintance with books, the vices of the world, and the arts by which those vices are frequently concealed for the destruction of the innocent, yet his philanthropy revolted from the adoption of the narrow, and, in his opinion, the illiberal precept, of "believing every man to be a rogue till you prove him to be honest." O'Brien regulated his conduct to, and opinions of, mankind by a more generous principle, and a rule equally secure, which was the result of benevolence, approved

by his understanding ; and it was his practice to hope all men to be virtuous, but not to trust them as such until a knowledge of their character proved his wishes just.

The honest countenance of Captain Bernard, and the frankness of his address, prepossessed O'Brien extremely in his favour ; and in spite of the caution prudence warned him to shield himself with in his intercourse with new acquaintance, there was an openness of expression in his looks and manner that rendered the juvenile Hibernian excessively engaging to strangers ; who might instantly conjecture his youth and country by an evident national character, notwithstanding his constant intercourse with the highest classes of polished society, had prevented his contracting either the vernacular idiom, the common pronunciation, or the peculiar accent of the Irish.

Captain Bernard was a native of England ; his profession, however, had made him a citizen of the world ; and having, during a long military life, been quartered in Ireland, he remembered, with gratitude, the hospitable attention he had there received, and gave every Hibernian an affectionate greeting. With the cordial urbanity he had learned amongst the Irish, Captain Bernard

accosted O'Brien ; and as many of their acquaintance were common to both, from the English officer's late residence in Ireland, Charles immediately found the captain a most agreeable companion.

The dinner was elegant, the company social, and O'Brien never felt himself more at ease, notwithstanding his being surrounded by entire strangers.

Colonel Herbert performed the honours of his table with grace and pleasantry ; shewing particular attention to O'Brien, who had never been in better spirits to display the various and elegant talents he possessed, to shine as a polished gentleman and a convivial companion. He could with facility adapt himself to every kind of conversation, and he had strength of head to push the bottle briskly round : but he had laid down rules of decorum and sobriety, from which no temptation had power to make him swerve ; and it was his invariable practice to discountenance all discourse, however witty, that tended to indecency or immorality, and never to drink immoderately : for he considered every person responsible for their actions to several tribunals ; and at the bar of self-consideration, of public propriety, and, above all, of religious obedience, he felt himself amen-

able to conscience ; and did not flatter himself with the fallacious idea, that inebriety could excuse the slightest fault which might be its consequence ; believing that intoxication, instead of palliating, aggravated an offence.

These opinions O'Brien gloried in professing openly, as he did his piety, keeping the due medium between ostentatious boasting of virtue, and its concealment, from the paltry fear of becoming an object of ridicule to those who deride morality and mock at religion.

The discovery of these sentiments prevented Colonel Herbert from pressing his guests to copious libations at the shrine of Bacchus, which, as the master of the table, he might otherwise have believed himself under a necessity of offering to a young Hibernian.

O'Brien, according to his usual custom, was the first to pass the bottle without partaking its contents, although the wine was excellent ; and after the coffee had been served, he was making his bow to depart, when his host politely apologized for his omission of calling in Albemarle-street ; assuring O'Brien, that hurry of business

had alone been the cause of an apparent neglect, that should as soon as possible be repaired. " I do not hold myself at liberty," added Colonel Herbert, " to order you to quarters until I have fulfilled the obligation of waiting on you : however, I must take the licence of requesting you to be in readiness to join your regiment speedily, as I shall soon have the pleasure of personally requesting you to repair to the standard of honour and duty."

The young soldier made a suitable reply to this pleasant address of Colonel Herbert, whose obliging condescensions increased instead of lessening his consequence : and O'Brien's manner fully evinced the respect and gratitude he felt towards his commander and patron ; proving, that a noble spirit will never presume upon indulgence, but rather consider itself doubly bound by it to the performance of its duties ; and that obligations conferred with elegance and generosity on such minds, will make a deep and indelible impression.

The guests of Colonel Herbert now took leave of him. O'Brien exchanged cards with his brother officers at departure ; and perceiving, by Captain Bernard's address, that attending him towards his lodgings would not be out of the way

to Albemarle-street, the young Hibernian accompanied his new acquaintance in his road homeward.

Their conversation naturally turned on the subject of their profession and regiment, which Captain Bernard had lately entered ; but although he had not long been the associate in arms of his colonel and Wilmot, he spoke of both with particular regard ; affording O'Brien the heartfelt pleasure of enlarging on a theme, in which gratitude and friendship made him peculiarly eloquent. The mention of Colonel Herbert's noble generosity, and Wilmot's uncommon worth, of which O'Brien was happy to give an admirable illustration in their amiable munificence towards himself, (in order to pay the due tribute of acknowledgments for favours to his patron and to his friend, to whom he was indebted for those benefits Charles's spirit felt anxious to confess, instead of being desirous to conceal) led Captain Bernard to dilate on the subject of Colonel Herbert's and Wilmot's peculiar situation relative to each other, as throwing additional lustre on the character of both.

O'Brien was rejoiced at this favourable opportunity of learning many particulars of his new

friends and associates ; and informing his companion that he was entirely unacquainted with the private history of Lord Herbert's family, to which Captain Bernard referred, he promised a relation of it ; and O'Brien listened, with eager attention, to the following narrative :—

“ Frederic Wilmot,” said Bernard, “ is supposed to owe his origin to a clandestine and unfortunate marriage of Lord Herbert's only daughter, which her father's severity precipitated the unhappy girl into, and afterwards compelled her to conceal.

“ Report says, that there existed an attachment between her and a nephew of Lord Herbert's, which was displeasing to the parents, as the young couple had not sufficient fortune to render it an advantageous match on either side : for this reason they were debarred each other's society, and Miss Herbert was so cruelly persecuted on account of her cousin, that he is supposed to have devised a plan of uniting himself to her secretly, in order to seize an opportunity of rescuing her from the father's severity. After the marriage, which is pretty well authenticated, young Herbert obtained a commission in the army ; and before he could contrive the means of securing a retreat for his bride, the regiment was ordered abroad, and

he fell a victim to the unhealthiness of a West India climate, leaving his wife in a situation to become a mother.

“ About the period of the young officer’s decease, his widowed cousin was on a visit to a particular friend, where the birth of Wilmot was concealed ; and where his mother soon expired from the shock her husband’s death occasioned, as it is said she considered herself the cause of his untimely fate, from the knowledge that he had chosen the army in hopes of enabling himself to increase the power of rendering her independent of their relations.

“ This is believed to be the true history of Wilmot, who was introduced to his grandfather’s protection about two years after his birth.

“ Lord Herbert is a man of uncommon severity, but the appeal to his compassion was so strong, in the hapless tale of an orphan grandchild, deprived of both his parents by the cruelty of theirs, that he always treated the boy with the utmost kindness, although he has never acknowledged him as a grandson ; but endeavoured, on the contrary, to disclaim any relationship to the youth, by circulating a report that he is the off-

spring of some low person, and that humanity alone made him the protector of Wilmot.

“The austerity of Lord Herbert’s character, however, discredits the belief of his assertion, that Wilmost’s claims on him are merely those of charity, because he has always been treated with an affection and an attention that appear to place him as the rival of Colonel Herbert in his father’s regards.

“Whether Wilmot believes himself the offspring of nobility or indigence, is uncertain ; but his conduct, from childhood, has been exemplary in every respect, and equally free from the mean servility of dependance, and the arrogance of pretension.

“Lord Herbert has several times been displeased with his son on account of his obstinate rejection of advantageous matrimonial connections proposed by his lordship ; and it has been the interference of Wilmot alone that has accommodated matters between the father and son, and keeps them on tolerable terms ; using his influence over Lord Herbert solely for the noble purpose of serving the colonel, who, instead of harbour-

ing the least jealousy of Wilnot's ascendancy, or considering him as an intruder in the family, treats him with a parent's kindness; and it is supposed by many, that the intention of making the youth his heir prevents the colonel from forming any alliance."

Captain Bernard's history deeply interested O'Brien's feelings, as it was a touching narrative of his dearest friend's birth, situation, and prospects; and proved him an object worthy of fortune's favours, and of the exalted regard O'Brien cherished for him from the first moment chance had introduced him to the knowledge of Sir Phe-lim's family, in the charming character of benevolence warmed by enthusiasm. There is nothing so delightful to beings of that description as the certainty of having found congenial souls for intimate associates; and O'Brien's ardent heart exulted in the idea, that his entrance into the busy world, instead of throwing him into society pernicious to his morals, as is too often the fate of innocence and youth, had afforded him a singular opportunity of finding and proving a friend, who would be the happiness and honour of his life.

Such reflections occupied him after his separation from Captain Bernard, towards whom he felt

an increased regard on knowing him to be strongly attached to his colonel and to Wilmot; for besides the coincidence of opinion, which is always a bond of union, O'Brien thought that an admiration of virtue proved the possession of worth, which, more than any thing, fixed his esteem.

On reaching home, Charles found the Viscountess de Briangon, and her amiable niece, whom Erina playfully introduced to her brother as a new acquaintance, by the appellation of the Countess of Kinross; which was soon explained to O'Brien by the information, that the fair Rosaline had been created a peeress by royal favour, that the honours her great grandsire's valour had won by naval services might be perpetuated by his descendants; to prove to the emulation of future times, that the great and generous sovereign of the British empire delights in rewarding, by brilliant distinctions, the merits of his brave and loyal subjects.

O'Brien elegantly congratulated the young countess on her flattering honours; and was entertained by her, to continue to bestow on her the endearing title of his friend Rosaline, as that was an appellation as distinctively honouring as any,

since the friendship of Erina and her brother must imply merit in the object.

O'Brien, as usual, recounted to his family circle the events of the day, and experienced the liveliest pleasure in relating the eulogy of Wilmot; whom, with the most grateful feelings, he gloried in calling his benefactor. As such, Erina valued the youth, although personally a stranger, with an affection pure, and almost as animated as that she cherished for her brother; whilst Rosaline, sincerely attached to her friends Erina and O'Brien by a sisterly regard, had accustomed herself, from sympathy with them, to admire, and almost idolize Wilmot in idea, where her imagination had pourtrayed the youth of fancy superior to human virtue, and equal to celestial perfection both in mind and figure.

O'Brien had habituated himself, since his interview with the interestingly beautiful *incognita*, to consider Wilmot as her brother. He had dwelt so much on that idea, that supposition had insensibly established itself as a certainty; so much so, that he was surprised to find, from the history of his friend, the impossibility of Wilmot's fancied relationship to the lovely stranger, now, more than ever, the object of curiosity and wonder.

O'Brien's heart continually and ardently desired the elucidation of a mystery which his reason vainly endeavoured to unravel. Amidst innumerable conjectures, O'Brien's thoughts floated on a sea of uncertainty, tossed from doubt to impossibility ; and, from a confusion of improbabilities and contradictory surmises, he could collect nothing but certainty that the unknown charmer was neither the sister nor the daughter of Colonel Herbert, nor any near relation of Wilmot's ; because his story, as related by Captain Bernard, clearly proved, that the young lady entrusted to the care of Colonel Herbert, could be of no nearer consanguinity to the companion of her journey to town, or to Wilmot, than a distant cousin. This certainly seemed to place O'Brien eternally out of the smallest likelihood of a second interview with her ; and he resolved to banish from his mind every unsatisfactory conjecture, and to endeavour to cease all reflection on a subject, that, if cherished in remembrance, must be accompanied by disappointment and useless regret.

O'Brien had the power of subjecting his heart, and all its strongest feelings, to the controul of reason, by the same energy of soul that nurtured his keen sensibility ; and thus the same powers

of mind that made him an enthusiast in sentiment, rendered him a philosopher in intellect, uniting qualities, in his rare character, which seldom meet, and which double each other's value when thus happily joined ; for understanding, when unadorned by sensibility, is not half so admirable as when it is blended with those acute feelings, that require the controul of wisdom to stamp them with its mark, and make them, by this means, the current coin of human happiness and virtue.

O'Brien had an activity of mind which, seizing every moment for useful occupation, left not an instant to that indolence that is the nurse of weariness and dejection. The soul, like the body, requires exercise to keep it in health ; and Charles was so sensible of this, that he kept both in constant exertion, which gave to each uncommon powers.

It was now the midst of summer, and from the noisy bustle of the still thronged metropolis, where suffocating heat adds to the solstitial beams a double influence, O'Brien fled for coolness and peaceful silence to the sylvan haunts of Kensington's royal gardens. A pocket volume of Horace was the companion of his morning walk ; and seating himself in a refreshing shade, he was

absorbed in the beauties of the classic page, when his attention was arrested by the soft music of a female voice, which his heart instantly recognised as the dulcet sounds that had charmed his ears when the beautiful unknown had blessed his sight; and looking up, he perceived her walking near him in earnest conference with an elderly lady, of the most amiable and genteel deportment. O'Brien had chosen a sequestered spot for his studious seat, which was overshadowed by trees that almost concealed him from view, so that he had an opportunity of examining the object of his admiration and curiosity before she saw him; and her loveliness seemed to have increased since his late interview. She had already drawn close to O'Brien without observing him; and he had heard her say, in the sweetest accents imaginable, "These delightful shades remind me of my dear mother's retreat. I wish that dear parent could have the pleasure I now enjoy in the society of your grace." At the conclusion of this speech the beautiful unknown raised her fine eyes from the ground, and casting a glance at O'Brien, appeared confused and irresolute whether she should salute or pass him without notice. This perturbation O'Brien read in her looks, and his high spirit instantly counselled him to avert his regards; but before his admira-

tion could be prevailed on to relinquish the fascinating view before him, the blushing maid acknowledged, by a smiling inclination of her lovely person, that the youth's was perfectly remembered. There was something so irresistibly engaging in the expression of her face, and a power so powerfully attractive in the graces of her air and form, every movement of which spoke sentiment, that O'Brien could not resist the impulse of approaching the lovely girl. Had he obeyed the dictates of his heart, the energetic youth would have prostrated himself before the object of his idolatry; but he had sufficient command of himself to restrain his adoration in such a manner as to evince it only by a bow; which declared so much, that the unknown virgin blushed and trembled as O'Brien looked unutterable admiration. As he had not the smallest degree of presumption, this encounter he felt embarrassing to him in the extreme, since he perceived it was excessively so to the charming maid; and he was silently withdrawing from her, when he heard her propose to her companion to return home, as she found the heat oppressive. "I fear," replied the lady, "that my carriage is not in waiting yet, as I sent it to take Lady Ann Westford's little girl an airing round the park, believing you would not be tired of sauntering in your favourite woods

till four o'clock, at which time I ordered my servants to be in waiting for us. However, my love, as you really seem indisposed, I feel uneasy, and request you will rest yourself in this cool seat for a little to recover yourself ; and, in the mean time, I will enquire if my carriage has returned. Perhaps the little invalid is too ill to be out to-day, and, if so, my servants will be at the gate."

O'Brien could not avoid attending to ladies who appeared to want assistance, as the lovely unknown looked nearly fainting, and her companion seemed extremely distressed at the situation of her young friend, whom she prevailed on to lean on the seat O'Brien had quitted. Coming up to them, with an address peculiarly elegant and engaging, he offered his services with so much earnestness, combined with modesty, that they could not have been rejected with civility ; and the elderly lady, thanking the youth for his polite attention, requested him to enquire if the Duchess of Willesborough's carriage was in waiting ; apologizing for giving him so much trouble, by saying she was afraid to leave her young friend.

Delighted to find his services accepted, O'Brien flew on the embassy in which he had been employed ; and quickly returning on the wings of im-

patience, to relieve the inquietude of his own feelings, as much as those of the ladies whom he was charmed to serve, he came back, in breathless haste, to acquaint them, that the Duchess of Willesborough's carriage was in waiting at her grace's commands.

O'Brien's assistance was more than repaid by the courtesies of the duchess; but the acknowledgments of the beautiful maidwere, in O'Brien's mind, far, far indeed, beyond the merits of any human services.

He now felt himself, in a manner, obliged to offer his hand to conduct the ladies to their carriage, and was in readiness to wait the duchess's pleasure, when her grace entreated her young friend to lean on her, and endeavour to reach the gate, in order, as soon as possible, to shelter herself from the burning rays of the sun, which would become hotter as the day advanced.

The lovely girl was now, more than ever, interesting to the sentimental youth, whose tenderness was awakened always in proportion as it was demanded, and who never thought the female sex more amiable than when in need of protection. With a touching air, descriptive of the ele-

gantly refined feelings he experienced, O'Brien attended the duchess and her beauteous charge to the equipage in waiting ; and handing her into the carriage, at the request of her grace, whom he next assisted, he made a low obeisance as he withdrew trembling from a touch which had electrified his frame, and thrown his mind into such a flutter of confusion, that he could attend to nothing but the grateful bow of the enchanting *incognita*, which, to O'Brien's heart, expressed gratitude, refined by sentiment enthusiastic as his own.

As the footman closed the coach-door O'Brien remarked that the ducal arms were borne in a lozenge, which told him nothing respecting the situation of the charming unknown, except that she was under the protection of the dowager Duchess of Willesborough ; and the carriage being ordered home, drove off, leaving O'Brien fixed in deep musing. Starting from it in a few moments, he re-entered the garden, and hastening to the sequestered shade where the lovely vision had lately blessed his sight, he seated himself, with a sensation of enthusiasm, on the bench where the charming maid had just reposed herself. O'Brien sat for some time with folded arms, absorbed in thought. He reflected with

delight on his good fortune in having again beheld the beauteous creature, whose second view had increased the impression which the first sight of her charms had made on him. He delighted in retracing in his glowing imagination her every word and look ; and thus employed the lapse of unheeded hours until the lengthened shades of evening reminded him that it must be past the time of Sir Phelim's dinner ; and as he hurried home, distressed at the idea that he had probably occasioned pain by his unaccountable absence, and had caused his grandsire some suffering from unusual waiting for his dinner, O'Brien vowed to himself, never again to indulge in useless reveries, which might unfit him for proper attention to the duties of social and domestic life. On reaching home O'Brien did indeed find the family uneasy at his extraordinary absence. M'Shane was almost out of his wits in conjecturing what could have become of his dear master, and ran to receive him with a smile of affectionate welcome ; while the unusual gravity of Dennis, as he served the dinner, seemed to reproach O'Brien for having kept Sir Phelim some hours waiting for his return. But although the good baronet had been in anxious expectation, he welcomed Charles with a jest, instead of the reproaches he felt conscious of meriting.

O'Brien found a card, which informed him Colonel Herbert had paid him the compliment of a visit; and the dinner was hurried in order to keep their appointment at Madame de Briançon's, where the family of Sir Phelim had agreed to pass the evening.

The viscountess received her Hibernian friends with more than usual warmth; and soon after their entrance informed them, that a letter from the Count de St. Amand, her brother, had arrived in the morning, with an account of some affairs which demanded her presence at Paris; and that in consequence, she should be obliged to shorten her stay in London. "As the viscount, my son," added Madame de Briançon, "is compelled for some months to be with his regiment in the south of France, and I found my abode in England very pleasing, I had resolved not to visit Paris till autumn; but circumstances have occurred to alter my plan, and I must be in France within a fortnight, which grieves me much, as I must sorrow, with Rosaline, to part from such agreeable friends as those who now honour me with their presence."

The viscountess bowed, addressing the complimentary conclusion of her speech to Sir Phelim's

family; and each of them felt and expressed the sincerest regret at the prospect of thus speedily losing the pleasure of a society which had, in a great measure, contributed to render the metropolis of England delightful to them. The good baronet, Mrs. O'Brien, and Charles, from a tender and affectionate nature, lamented their approaching separation from Madame de Briançon and her lovely niece; but no one felt so acutely the intended departure of the viscountess as Erina, whose warm and gentle nature had found, in the amiable Rosaline, a second self. At the idea of losing the presence of her first and dearest friend for ever, Erina experienced a grief so extreme that she could not restrain her tears; and retiring to a window, she wept in silent sorrow unobserved, until Rosaline entered, when the meeting of the youthful friends discovered to each other and the company, that many tears had fallen from the eyes of Erina and the young Countess of Kinross.

Madame de Briançon had just been informing Mrs. O'Brien of her future plan respecting Rosaline's union with her cousin the viscount. "I am delighted," said the viscountess, "with the prospect of felicity which awaits my son in the possession of a being who has every quality that can recommend her to me as a daughter-in-law."

Her birth, her beauty, her fortune, and, above all, the virtues of her heart, render her most desirable, in every respect, as a match for my son. I can find but one objection to the marriage—my niece is a protestant : however, she is extremely young, and I have hopes that her principles in religion may be changed, as she is docile, and has promised to investigate the merits of the catholic faith, and to adopt it, if convinced of its superiority. As business will carry me to the country on my arrival in France, it is my intention to place Rosaline in a convent at Paris, where I was educated, and where I have hopes of her being converted to our religion ; as I know the abbess has made many proselytes to the Roman catholic persuasion.”

At the conclusion of this speech Rosaline entered the room. Her entrance, at all times uncommonly sweet, had, on this evening, an unusual expression of softness, which melancholy often gives to beauty ; and the appearance and manner of Lady Kinross had something so peculiarly touching, that it impressed every one present with the idea of her being perfectly angelic.

The greeting of the two friends was affecting ; and during the whole evening a kind of sadness

pervaded the circle, which led the conversation to serious subjects, and afforded Mrs. O'Brien an opportunity of conversing with Madame de Briançon apart, on the theme of religion; and induced the anxious mother to express her wishes that Erina might be firmly fixed in the Romish persuasion, which the viscountess was of opinion would be best effected by a temporary residence in a religious house, where the strictness of monastic institutions, and the retirement of a convent, with all its pomp of ceremony, and the example of sanctity, would enforce pious observances, and confirm the mind of youth in the road to true religion. Madame de Briançon concluded with an exhortation to Mrs. O'Brien to permit her daughter to be the companion of Rosaline during her abode at the nunnery; assuring the anxious mother, that she would regard and protect Erina as her own child if she were allowed to accompany Lady Kinross to the convent.

Mrs. O'Brien thanked the viscountess for the interest she so kindly expressed; agreeing on the excellence of the proposed plan, but discovering a fear of its impracticability, as Sir Phelim seemed desirous of returning, as soon as possible, to Ireland, which would render it difficult for them to get Erina home.

Although Madame de Briançon was zealous in the plan she had proposed, yet she was at a loss to obviate the objections to it made by Mrs. O'Brien, and the subject was merely mentioned in the social circle as a thing which might be delightful, but was absolutely impracticable.

On O'Brien's return home he found a note addressed to him, and read as follows :—



“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ I did myself the honour of calling on you this morning, to request you will join the regiment at ———, on this day se'nnight. Your presence at quarters will be required until the 15th of September, from which period I shall have much pleasure in giving you leave of absence for four months, in order that you may have an opportunity of visiting your native country, if agreeable to you. Should any business require your longer stay in Ireland, or elsewhere, amongst your friends, I shall be happy to extend your leave of absence ; and have the honour to remain,

“ Dear sir,

“ Your's sincerely,

“ HENRY HERBERT.”

Charles communicated the contents of this note to the family circle ; and the amiable baronet, whose greatest pleasure consisted in gratifying the wishes of his daughter, and in contributing to the happiness and advantage of her children, immediately proposed to defer his return to Glenrock till Charles's leave of absence would permit their revisiting Ireland together. " And in the mean time," added the indulgent Sir Phelim, " Erina may accompany her dear friend Lady Kinross to France. A visit to that country, under such good care as the viscountess, and with such an amiable companion as Rosaline, will improve our dear girl, at the same time that the excursion will amuse her. I am of opinion that education is completed by local knowledge of other countries, which enables us to estimate the advantages of our own ; and with this persuasion, I am desirous that Charles should see something of a place so celebrated as Paris. It is my intention, therefore, that he should accompany us on a little jaunt to France, when we visit it to bring Erina home."

O'Brien thanked his grandsire in the most grateful terms for his kind intentions respecting the projected party of pleasure, which he anticipated with extreme delight. And Erina, in tes-

timony of her gratitude, seized and kissed, with reverential affection, the hand of her indulgent grandfather ; while the smile that dimpled round her lips, and the silently descending tear that dropped upon Sir Phelim's hand, declared the mingled emotions of thankfulness for parental kindness that conferred a happiness in the gratification of friendship, but which cost filial affection a pang of regret, at the idea of a separation from parents most tenderly beloved.

The proposal of Sir Phelim accorded so much with the earnest wishes of Mrs. O'Brien, that she agreed to let Erina visit France, with the hopes and expectation of confirming her strongly in the Roman catholic faith ; and immediately acquainted Madame de Briançon, that her obliging offer of taking charge of Erina would be accepted with infinite gratitude and pleasure, as circumstances fortunately occurred to render her abode for a few months at the convent with Lady Kinross perfectly convenient for the plans of Sir Phelim ; who, in consideration of his grand-children's advantage, had deferred his return to Ireland till the winter, in order to allow his family the happiness of paying their compliments to the viscountess at Paris, for a few weeks in autumn. Madame de Briançon received this intelligence

with extreme satisfaction, on account of her catholic zeal, and the certainty that Erina's company and example, as a young professor of the Romish faith, would render her youthful *countrywoman* Rosaline, less unhappy at quitting the kingdom of her nativity, and less averse from the change of religion, which was a matter of extreme consequence to the peace of the viscountess ; who, like most foreigners, confounded the subjects of Great Britain under the general denomination of English people.

Rosaline, indeed, loved Erina, and was, in return, beloved by her, with an affection so tender, as to make her forget all national distinction in the sentiment of sisterly regard ; and this mutual attachment consoled them each under the painful idea of leaving scenes and people endeared to their gentle hearts, which were spared the sorrow of immediate separation.

The time previous to their departure from London was spent in a bustle of preparation for their journey, and in a multiplicity of visits and some engagements.

In the midst of all this hurry O'Brien's thoughts were occupied by the idea of the beautiful and

still unknown maid of his heart's idolatry ; and he almost daily stole an hour to seek, amidst her favourite shades of Kensington, the nymph whom his poetic fancy and exalted imagination deified as the tutelar divinity of those sylvan and charming scenes. He visited them, however, in vain ; for the goddess of O'Brien's soul had forsaken her groves, where the love-sick youth paid the homage of innumerable sighs to her remembrance, unblessed by her sight ; which he had flattered himself once more to enjoy before his departure from London.

The day fixed for it arrived, and O'Brien prepared, with a heavy heart, to leave his family. The idea of duty alone supported him in the moment of separation. With tearful eyes he looked from the drawing-room windows, expecting M'Shane with his horses, and saw the old soldier already mounted for their journey. Charles thought of his father's last adieus, and the tear of sorrow rolled down his cheek as he approached to his mother's embrace. Tearing himself from the beloved maternal arms, he received his grand-sire's blessing with a bursting heart, and then clasping the weeping Erina to his bosom, he articulated a fond farewell ; and said, in the tenderest accents, " Console yourself, my sweet sister, with

the hope of our re-union. *The first, the last, and the greatest grief of life, is a separation from those we love; but Heaven ordains it, and mortals should not murmur at the laws of Providence, which render this world a scene of trial, of happiness mixed with suffering: but in every sorrow the pious christian has this comfort, that shines through affliction's gloom as a brilliant constellation shoots sparkles through the darkness of night,—that comfort is, to fix the eye of faith on Heaven's mercy, and see beatitude, in the perpetual enjoyment of the presence of sainted kindred spirits and the Divine Essence, irradiate eternity with celestial glory."*

CHAP. III.

“The office of christian piety and benevolence might convert the dismal dungeons of a prison into a terrestrial paradise, affording a foretaste of those heavenly raptures blessed spirits are promised in eternal beatitude; where the reward of obedience, charity, and faith, is a crown of glory, and a participation of endless felicity, with sainted souls in the Divine presence, which is the fountain of life, righteousness, bliss, and immortality.”

CHARLES imprinted a kiss upon his sister's cheek; was again pressed to his mother's heart; once more grasped, with reverence, his grandsire's hand; and bidding a faltering adieu to the family circle, quitted it with tears. And Erina, through her's, beheld her brother mount his horse and depart, waving a last farewell as he rode off, followed by trusty M'Shane.

As Erina wept her brother's departure, she

thought of her own, which had been fixed for the ensuing day ; and passed the morning in tears, anticipating the grief of the morrow.

Madame de Briançon and Rosaline were too much engaged and hurried in preparations for their journey, to visit their friends in Albemarle-street ; and their domestic circle, unenlivened by the gaiety of the viscountess, the smiles of the lively Lady Kinross, or the vivacity of Charles, spent the day in sadness. Sir Phelim was not inspired to raise the laugh by his accustomed good-humoured jocularities. Mrs O'Brien was unusually dejected ; and the gentle Erina's spirits would have drooped to melancholy, had she not chased the heavy hours with the perusal of a favourite author ; and found, that a well-chosen book can divert a mind of taste from the weariness of a dull and lonely situation.

Erina was so passionately fond of her harp, because it was her brother's gift, and had, therefore, become her favourite instrument, that she had entreated it might accompany her to France ; and it had, accordingly, been packed up and embarked with many articles belonging to Rosaline. Erina, therefore, had nothing but her

piano-forte to amuse her; and, for the first time in her life, she was out of humour with music. Her drawing-box was likewise packed up with the things that were to go with her to Paris; so that reading was her only resource, and she now experienced the advantage that may be derived from a fondness for study; as her application to the perusal of a serious author cheered a day that, without the companionship of a book, would have been dull in the extreme.

On the day appointed for her leaving London, Erina, with her mother and Sir Phelim, repaired, according to Madame de Briançon's appointment, to partake of a farewell breakfast at her apartments in Pall-Mall. The viscountess had provided an elegant repast, and some noble friends of Lady Kinross had been invited to this parting entertainment; of which the fair Rosaline did the honours with a touching grace. Although she had no nearer relations in Great Britain than some distant cousins in Scotland, whom she had seldom seen, yet she regretted quitting England; loving it as the country of her birth and her residence from infancy; and nothing but her attachment to duty and propriety could have reconciled her to the idea of giving up her native land for

ever, to place herself under the only parental protection that remained to her, after the decease of Lady Elizabeth Bruce.

Rosaline had a tender heart, and the warmest affections ; and those sentiments which made her regard and reverence the Viscountess de Briançon as the sister of her late father, led the gentle maid to love her native land, and those acquaintances whom she had known from childhood. The most respected of those intimates now surrounded Rosaline, and regretting her departure from amongst them, became doubly endeared to her affectionate heart as the hour of leaving them approached. The traces of recent tears rendered the amiable girl inexpressibly interesting to the sentimental Erina, whose feeling mind knew so well how to sympathise with the sensations of her charming friend's heart ; and perceiving Rosaline affected by her trying situation, Erina, with a warmth of friendship enthusiasm alone can experience, repressed her own feelings to relieve and fortify those of her fair friend ; who, from an equal degree of attachment, and with a similar force of exertion, rallied her sinking spirits to support Erina's.

Madame de Briançon, with the vivacity of a

gay Parisian of fashion, entertained her guests with an ease and volubility that inspired the rich baronet with his usual cheerfulness, and the company was as lively as English societies generally are; and dispersing after breakfast, left the viscountess at liberty to commence her journey. Having determined to perform it at leisure, she had settled to sleep at Rochester, in order to divide the distance between London and Dover, so as to arrive there early on the following evening.

Madame de Briançon was not only an agreeable, but an amiable woman. She loved Rosaline almost with maternal tenderness, and studied to make her happy by every means in her power. Well aware that a mind endued with the sensibility of her niece would grieve to leave her native country for a constant residence in a foreign kingdom, the viscountess had attended to every thing that could divert the regrets of Rosaline on quitting England, and render France pleasant to her. An ardent desire to effect this had, in addition to her catholic zeal, made her anxious that Erina should accompany her friend during a residence in the convent; and the wish of keeping up the spirits of her young companions induced Madame de Briançon to make a little festivity of their adieus to London, and induced her to ar-

range her journey rather as a party of pleasure than a removal from regretted friends. For this purpose, the viscountess amused Erina and Rosaline, neither of whom had ever travelled the Kentish road, with an enumeration of all that was worthy notice in the way to Dover; and the two young friends were too happy in their union, and too grateful for the attentions of Madame de Briançon, to give her even a suspicion that her wishes to amuse and gratify them failed to do so in a degree equal to her kind desires. Force is in general proportioned to the opposing power; and strenuous exertion, on the part of the amiable Rosaline and Erina, enabled each to combat with their grief; which was evinced only by a few tears which fell from their eyes on the bosom of Mrs. O'Brien, when she embraced them both at parting.

Sir Phelim, with the gallantry of a young beau, handed the viscountess into her carriage, while each, smiling, talked of meeting in about three months amidst the gaieties of Paris; and it was not, until the cheerful baronet remarked the tears of Erina, and felt them drop on his hands, as she imprinted on them a farewell kiss of filial reverence, that a tear bedimmed the worthy grandsire's sight. Although he strove to hide his

glistening eyes, Erina's marked the agitation which had vainly endeavoured to conceal itself in smiles, and waving a last adieu, she wept ; and passing her handkerchief across her face, she lost sight of her grandfather as the carriage drove off from the house that contained her mother.

During the journey Madame de Briançon did every thing in her power to entertain her young companions ; and appeared to them more amiable than ever. It was impossible to be dull in the society of the viscountess, for she had a vivacity, a pleasantry, and a good humour, that made her the cheerfullest companion imaginable ; and Rosaline's and Erina's sweet dispositions, that were ever ready to receive and afford happiness, experienced extreme pleasure in evincing to Madame de Briançon, that her presence consoled them for the absence of other friends.

This earnest wish to please and be pleased, soon decked Rosaline and Erina in the sweetest smiles of good-nature ; and they pursued their journey with spirits, which proceeded from that delicate sensibility that made each of the lovely girls bathe her pillow with tears, which tender affection paid in secret, as the homage of the heart, to the remembrance of absent friends.

On the following day Rosaline and Erina were highly gratified by the view of Canterbury cathedral ; and, with a mixture of pain and pleasure, drew near the port whence they were to embark for France.

The travellers arrived at Dover early enough, on a fine evening in June, to take a view of the castle and its surrounding scenery : and learning that a packet would sail for Calais on the next morning, the party took their passage ; retiring soon to rest, that they might be in readiness to embark at the dawn of the ensuing day.

Neither Rosaline nor her friend slept much during the night ; for their thoughts were occupied on their respective situations.

Rosaline's spirits drooped as the day approached in which she was to be transplanted from her native land into a foreign country ; and Erina's heart sunk at the idea of leaving, even for a short residence abroad, the paternal home, and the maternal arms from which she had never yet been absent a single day. Rosaline and her friend, in silent dread, watched the breaking dawn ; and each, with a heavy sigh, saw the rosy morning advance : but the bustle of em-

barkation repressed their tears until the packet, getting under weigh, unfurled its spreading canvass to the gale, and scudded before the breeze that bore them from the shores of Britain.

Rosaline stood beside Erina on the deck to enjoy the refreshing air of morning, and to take a last look of the receding cliffs of Albion, which soon fading from their view, bedimmed their eyes with tears of regret. Rosaline became more affected when she sought the approaching land of France : she thought of her father, and hailed his country with a filial emotion ; whilst fast-descending tears dropped from her eyes into that sea upon whose waves her grandsire's glory, and her country's triumph, orphaned her infant state ! The scene of her fate now pourtrayed upon her heart, in vivid colours, by imagination, shewed the ocean tinged with the sanguine stream which issued from her father's fatal wounds ; the wind sighed as if charged with his expiring groans ; and her soul felt all those pangs which stabbed her mother's bosom with the tale of her dreadful widowhood. The horror of Rosaline's thoughts became so painful that they seemed to threaten the dethronement of her reason ; and, in an agony of grief that mocks description, she threw herself upon Erina's bosom.

“Moderate your affliction, my Rosaline,” cried Erina, “and let my friendship assist your religion to sooth those griefs of life that reason tells us ought to be endured with christian fortitude.”

The voice of Erina seemed, to the soul of Rosaline, like the celestial sound of a seraph whispering peace; and her heart instantly acknowledged the sovereign power of friendship to calm the troubled breast, and of religion to tranquillize the perturbed spirit; and mentally ejaculating a prayer for Divine aid, guidance, and protection, Rosaline, in a few moments, regained that composure of mind which piety can afford in every situation of life; but which will be sought in vain by those who, insensible to religion, know not the healing balm it sheds into the wounded soul.

As the wind was fair, the passage was short and pleasant; and the packet entering the port of Calais, permitted the voyagers, at an early hour, to land on Gallic ground.

Madame de Briançon, although she professed to like England, seemed renovated by the air of France. The same natural sentiment that inspired her with increased gaiety on her arrival in

her native land, depressed the spirits of the two British travellers ; who, remarking the difference that distinguishes the French and English nation from each other, felt themselves strangers in a foreign clime. A mind of extreme sensibility attaches something of melancholy to the idea of being in a strange land ; this sentiment made the gentle Rosaline give a sigh to Britain, at the recollection that she should, most probably, never again reside in the land of her nativity ; and, as Erina thought of Hibernia and its sister isle, she gave a sigh to the remembrance of Glenrock, and to the British metropolis ; which, as her mother's and grandsire's residence, induced her tender heart to regard as a much loved home. In spite of Rosaline's and Erina's natural gaiety, the novelty of their situation would have made them serious, had not their delicate sense of propriety induced them to appear cheerful, in order to evince their grateful sense of Madame de Briançon's kind attentions to render their journey to Paris agreeable.

The viscountess stopped at Chantilly and St. Dennis, to afford her young companions an opportunity of seeing the grandeur and riches of France ; and Rosaline and Erina were charmed by the beauties of art and nature exhibited in the

princely palace of Condé, and in the magnificent abbey of St. Dennis. The handsome avenue leading from thence to Paris impressed them with an idea of superbness, which their arrival in that city rather disappointed: for, although the buildings were fine, they sought, in vain, that consistent neatness that characterises the streets of London, and gives it a pre-eminence in regularity, convenience, and elegance, over other great metropolises, although many may boast edifices superior to those of London.

The hôtel of Madame de Briangon was the epitome of France: the structure was large and handsome; the apartments were numerous and spacious; some were decorated with a profusion of costly furniture; but the staircase, passages, and anti-chamber, to the *suite* of habitable rooms, were far from being, either in arrangement or cleanliness, consistent with the apartments to which they led.

Rosaline could not help regretting the comfort and neatness to which she had been accustomed in England, and whispered Erina, that she would rather be the humble inhabitant of a cottage in England than the noble possessor of a palace in France. A sigh escaped her as she gazed around;

and Erina also sighed, from sympathy, at the idea that her dearest friend's fate irrevocably fixed her abode in a country far from Hibernia ; to which Erina regretted, that in a few short months she must remove, to live a life separated from Rosaline, never more to meet, except in intellectual intercourse.

The arrival of the viscountess brought a crowd of complimentary visitors to welcome her return to Paris ; and amongst many to whom Lady Kiaross and Erina were introduced, was the Count de St. Amand, and his son, a youth about eighteen. The count was a man of fashion and a finished courtier, and received Rosaline with more ceremonious politeness than parental affection ; yet there was something prepossessing in his manner, which engaged those attentions from his amiable niece, that she would have considered herself bound to pay the brother of her lamented father, even had her uncle been forbidding in his address.

The chevalier, her cousin, had an agreeable figure, and an easy and insinuating manner, which a polished education almost invariably gives to youths of high birth and great pretensions.

A week of incessant gaiety succeeded the arrival of Madame de Briançon at Paris; and at the theatres, public walks, and private assemblies, the two young beauties were exhibited, admired, and caressed, as *les belles Angloises*; and, under that appellation, were celebrated in all the fashionable circles of Paris.

The business which had called the viscountess to France was now concluded, and permitted her departure from the metropolis, in order to visit some provincial friends in the country; and as she did not purpose returning from her excursion until the approach of winter, Madame de Briançon engaged the proposed asylum for her young charges at a convent in Paris, in order to prepare Rosaline for her meeting and nuptials with Monsieur de Briançon, who had appointed to visit his mother and intended bride early in the autumn, when he was to obtain permission to leave his regiment for some months.

When she had settled the pension of her niece and her young friend at the nunnery, and recommended them particularly to the spiritual guidance and pious zeal of the mother abbess, Madame de Briançon took Rosaline and Erina

to present them to the superior, who received them with a pompous courtesy. There was something in her civilities that inspired awe rather than confidence : and the gentle Lady Kinross and Erina, with tears of regret, received the parting salutations of the viscountess ; and would have felt themselves deserted and forlorn in a foreign country, had they not possessed in each other's society all the consolation which the tenderest friendship can bestow on feeling hearts.

The convent was a vast and antiquated edifice. Its gothic structure, massive enclosure, and huge iron gates, with innumerable bars and grated casements, gave it the appearance of a prison : and Rosaline and Erina experienced a kind of dread on seeing themselves confined within its dreary walls, even for a temporary abode. The gloomy cloisters and secluded cells ; the long-withdrawing aisles of the lonely chapel ; and the almost constant dismal peal of the deep-toned bell, tolling to prayers, at dawn for early matins, for mid-day masses, for vespers, and for the midnight orisons ; the silent sisterhood, in sable habits ; and the total sequestration from every society, except the awe-inspiring presence of the

lady abbess, or the grave meetings of the nuns,—made Rosaline and Erina feel themselves as in an exile from the cheerful scenes to which they had been accustomed ; and each would have thought herself in solitude, unblessed by human converse, had not their hearts found solace in the endearing intercourse of friendship, which daily bound them in stricter amity. Lady Kinross and her friend became hourly mutually more attached, and were inseparable.

The softness of their manners, the sweetness of their tempers, and the docility of their conduct, rendered them excessively beloved by the sisterhood ; and the lady abbess behaved to them with particular attention, without relaxing from that severe dignity of deportment that rendered her more feared than respected by the religious of her convent.

As Lady Kinross had been recommended to her care for conversion, much zealous pains were bestowed to initiate her into the doctrines and ceremonies of the Romish church : and in strict conformity with a promise she considered sacred, she gave the utmost attention to learn the faith proposed to her ; that, from a close exami-

nation of the popish tenets and worship, she might have sufficient knowledge either to receive or reject the Roman catholic belief, on reasonable conviction of its superiority, or inferiority, to protestantism. Rosaline had been educated in the persuasion of the church of England; she had been well instructed in her religion, and was of a pious disposition, which rendered her a firm protestant. She was sensible her attachment to the church of England proceeded from the evidence of its purity and perfection; but was rather afraid that her aversion to popery might depend on prejudice, as she was conscious of much ignorance respecting its creeds and ceremonies: she was so candid, therefore, as to wish to understand its errors before she ventured to condemn them; when Madame de Briançon, with the bigotry of a Roman catholic, the zeal of a devotee, and the authority of a parent, endeavoured to make Rosaline a convert to the Romish church.

Well aware that she must undergo an arduous trial on the subject of religion, situated as she was with the viscountess, Rosaline prudently, amiably, and dutifully, avoided any argument on a theme that might have been urged with violence;

and from an idea of moral and religious duty, rather than a pusillanimous subterfuge, she promised to consider the Roman catholic faith; and she now applied herself, with all imaginable diligence, to learn it thoroughly, in order to be repared for a contest with her aunt, should conscience oppose her submitting to parental authority in the cause of her religion.

Erina, who from penetration and experience knew the state of Rosaline's mind, as her character had been entirely investigated by her friend's observation, conscientiously refrained from biassing her judgment in the momentous determination she was about to decide on. Erina repected the protestant religion, although she was a Roman catholic in forms; and she had the tolerance to hope, and even believe, that a true christian of any persuasion might find favour in the sight of that merciful Being, who, in tender compassion to human frailty, has promised graciously to consider faith in redemption, and the desire of virtue, as means sufficient to salvation. Thus persuaded, Erina conformed to the worship she had been taught to pay the Divinity, in whom she firmly trusted for acceptance, conscious of the

ardent wish to perform more of his will than mortal weakness permitted.

Erina, educated in habits of piety, from custom and intention, was religious; and equally from habit and inclination, regularly attended the matins, masses, and vespers, to which the convent-bell summoned the inhabitants. Rosaline constantly accompanied her friend to the different services; believing, with her, that a christian's devotions, offered fervently to Heaven's Majesty, must rise acceptable from every shrine to the Divinity, whose omniscience knows all motives, regarding them as the test of human actions. Rosaline felt, with Erina, that the adoration of the great Creator might convert the whole universe into a temple; and reverencing every church consecrated to religious ceremonies as a sacred spot; she bent her knees at the Romish altar during the celebration of the mass, while her pure soul mounted on hymns of praise, to offer, at the celestial throne, the warmest devotion; and both Rosaline and Erina felt themselves united in sisterly regard with the nuns, because benevolence and christianity bound them to the holy sisterhood by the double ties of humanity and religion.

These sentiments continually inspired Lady

Kinross and her amiable friend with a sweetness of look and manner, that made them particular favourites in the convent.

The lady abbess, highly gratified by the docility and attention which Rosaline and Erina invariably paid to their superiors in years, to whoever instructed them, and especially to the professors of religion, or persons of sanctified manners, became really attached to the two English pensioners; who, without the smallest intention of duplicity, had, by the regularity of their conduct, and the submission of their deportment, given the superior of the convent, and the nuns, an idea that they were both equally established in the Roman catholic faith. This persuasion prevented those examinations and interrogations, which, in drawing forth the religious opinions of Rosaline, would have destroyed the illusion to which her conduct had unintentionally given birth; and which, fortunately for them, rendered their abode at the nunnery a peaceful, though not a joyous life.

Shortly after their settlement at the convent, the arrival of a new pensioner gave some variety to the scene.

The young lady, placed by her friends, and by her own desire, in this perfect retirement, was not, apparently, of a disposition calculated to increase the cheerfulness of a place almost always dull, and where contentment was the highest worldly enjoyment. The new pensioner, although evidently melancholy, was lovely as extreme youth, perfect beauty, and the most amiable manners, could render her.

A similarity of age, a fascinating exterior, and every indication of a mind pre-eminently great and refined, as her manners were superiorly noble and engagingly elegant, immediately attracted the attention and esteem of Rosaline and Erina; each of whom felt an irresistible inclination to form an intimacy with the young stranger.

A seriousness, uncommon in youth, threw round her a kind of reserve, which seemed to forbid every advance towards an acquaintance with her. Rosaline's timidity, and Erina's lofty spirit, would have been repulsed by the distant address of their new associate, had not the melancholy expression that pervaded her countenance, her every gesture and manner, spoken to the feeling hearts of Lady Kinross and her friend, in the language of enthusiastic sentiment, that the young

stranger was in need of that consolation which tender sympathy can alone bestow; and Rosaline and Erina amiably resolved to make pride yield to delicacy of feeling, and subdue repulses by those insinuating assiduities, which, in time, must vanquish reserve: and they soon had the happiness to observe, that their new companion was less averse to the intimacy into which they endeavoured to draw her.

The young stranger had been introduced to her associates at the convent by the name and title of Donna Seraphina, without any other appellation. To the lady abbess and the religious of the convent she spoke French with the fluency and accuracy of a Parisian; but with Rosaline and Erina she conversed in the English language with an ease and elegance, which would have led them to suppose her a native of England, had not her names and appearance induced the belief of her being a Spaniard. This opinion was farther confirmed by her speaking Spanish as a native tongue, and by her possessing many books in that language.

The manner of Seraphina's introduction to the convent, her appearance and address, which denoted an elevated origin, and the care by which

it was studiously concealed, with every circumstance relative to her birth and country, afforded a wide field of conjecture amongst the sisterhood, who continually busied themselves in unsatisfactory guesses respecting the young stranger.

Rosaline and Erina perceived, in every thing concerning her, an extraordinary mystery, which, although surprising, they wished not to have elucidated, since they observed her solicitous to conceal all affairs connected with her situation: that it was unhappy, was, however, evident; and the amiable Lady Kinross and her friend endeavoured most assiduously to alleviate, by unremitted and tender attentions to the dejected Seraphina, the griefs she anxiously concealed. Sometimes their kind solicitude softened her to tears; at other times lighted in her lovely countenance an evanescent ray of happiness; while the hearts of Rosaline and Erina experienced the pure joy that guardian angels feel, when, as ministers of celestial bounty, they are winged from heaven with its best gifts to mortals. The two young friends no longer found the convent dull, since they could administer consolation, within its dreary walls, to one who seemed in need of all the comfort friendship could bestow; and Rosaline and Erina hourly found, that *the offices of piety*

and christian benevolence might convert the dismal dungeon of a prison into a terrestrial paradise; affording a foretaste of those heavenly raptures blessed spirits are promised in eternal beatitude; where the reward of obedience, charity, and faith, is a crown of glory, and a participation of endless felicity with sainted souls in the Divine presence, which is the fountain of life, righteousness, bliss, and immortality.

CHAP. IV.

“ When surrounded by pleasures, we should, in the midst of our enjoyments, consider them as trials greater, as they are more seductive to virtue, than misfortunes; and when affliction oppresses us, we may ever find consolation in the idea, that this life is but a passage to that world where pious resignation under the severest woes, will be rewarded by an eternity of felicity.”

ROSALINE and Erina, congenial in delicacy of sentiment, in elegance of taste, and softness of manner; and both alike indefatigable in moral duties, as inseparable from religious obligations, were equally as assiduous and animated in their attentions to Seraphina, as they were enthusiastic in their admiration of her personal and mental attractions; which improved extremely on acquaintance, although they had dazzled surprisingly at first

sight, and appeared to leave nothing for future discovery.

Seraphina's beauty had a charm superior to that exquisite regularity of feature, and symmetry of form, which constitute personal perfection: all her movements afforded every variety of grace; her air was sentiment personified; her countenance had such infinity of expression, that her silent looks were eloquence, declarative of a nobly exalted soul, every idea and feeling of which shone as a ray of celestial excellence.

A being endued with such intellectual perfection could not fail of discovering it in Rosaline and Erina. Seraphina was sensible of all their merits. To a refined taste she united an acuteness of feeling, that attached her enthusiastically to all that was admirable; and the elegance of her mind, and energy of her sensibility, added to her exalted notions of virtue and gratitude, soon bound her to Rosaline and Erina by the tenderest and warmest affection.

Seraphina's heart was formed to feel and cherish a friendship, elevated to a sublimity almost beyond the desert of human objects; but the angelic

qualities of Lady Kinross and Erina justified the attachment Seraphina's energetic soul conceived for the two friends; with whom she formed a mental alliance, strong as her character was enthusiastic.

When Madame de Briançon engaged Rosaline's pension at the convent, a handsome accommodation was allotted to her, in consideration of her rank and the fortune she possessed. A suite of three apartments were assigned to her private use, and fitted up as a saloon, a bed-chamber, and a dressing-room, in an elegant manner. Rosaline had entreated Erina to be her companion in those apartments, and ordering a bed for her friend in her chamber, requested her to feel perfectly at home both in the sitting and dressing-room.

The saloon was furnished with a library of English, French, and Italian authors of eminence. Rosaline's piano-forte and tambourine, with Erina's harp and implements for painting, writing, and various works, gave the apartment an air of elegance and social comfort; and the constant application of Lady Kinross and her charming friend to their several accomplishments, trans-

formed their abode into the temple of taste, where cheerfulness might forget its enclosure within monastic walls.

On Seraphina's arrival at the convent, Rosaline and Erina invited her, with the most friendly courtesey, to their apartments, endeavouring to render them as gaily agreeable as circumstances admitted, in order to entertain their new guest, and induce her to repeat her visits ; but in spite of the pressing solicitations she received from the two friends to spend much of her time daily with them, Seraphina confined herself almost incessantly to her own chamber, except when the lady abbess required her presence, or when it was desired amongst the nuns assembled in the refectory at their meals.

At those hours, all the inhabitants of the convent were gathered together ; and Seraphina, although always silent and dejected, mixed with the sisterhood in a manner which excited general respect and attention ; whilst an air of uncommon reserve repressed all attempts at particular intimacy with her.

It was in these daily meetings that the engaging address of Rosaline and Erina insensibly stole on

the warm affections of Seraphina ; who, by nature candid, was soon induced to evince the attachment her noble mind paid as a tribute of admiration, of esteem, and gratitude, in return for the tender interest she perceived she had excited in the amiable hearts of Rosaline and Erina.

One day at dinner they remarked the traces of tears on Seraphina's cheeks ; and both the gentle friends, ever awake to sympathy, and anxious to sooth affliction, pressed the hand of Seraphina with unusual tenderness, and fixing their earnest regards upon her face, in the silent eloquence of expressive looks, declared their sorrow at her grief, although from them concealed. Congenial minds have intercourse without the aid of speech. The mute language of the eye can hold unutterable converse between hearts of sensibility : Seraphinas Rosalines and Erina's, understood each other without the assistance of words ; and as they grasped each other's hand in salutation, an alliance of amity was formed, by which each made a double league of friendship.

Erina, as usual, seated herself at dinner between Rosaline and Seraphina, and both endeavoured to raise her spirits by the most assiduous

attentions, which affected whilst they consoled her. As her tears descended, a smile illumined her face, and the animated sensations of her warm heart suffused her cheeks with a glow of gratitude, which made the glistening drops impearled upon her lovely face, appear like the showers which fall in sunshine on the vermil buds of opening roses in the vernal season.

At the conclusion of dinner, when the sisterhood retired from the refectory, Rosaline and Erina solicited Seraphina to join them in their apartment with such an earnestness of friendship and affection, that she found it impossible to refuse their request.

On entering the saloon of Lady Kinross, Seraphina was struck with the beauty of a landscape Erina's pencil had that morning completed; and the amiable girl, always anxious to afford pleasure, flew to bring her port-folio, and shewed Seraphina a collection of views and designs; which were praised with the high encomiums they deserved. Erina was neither desirous of compliments, nor insensible to commendation; she aimed at excellence in every accomplishment, impelled to attain perfection in the arts from her extraordinary taste for them; and she felt gratified

by praise, not from vanity, but from an ardent wish to please others, as much as herself, by the pursuit of her various accomplishments. Erina was so little selfish, that all her actions, employments, and desires, had in view the delight of others, which was her chief happiness. In the seclusion of the convent she had assiduously devoted every hour, unclaimed by religious duties, to cultivate her talents, prompted to close application by the hope of contributing to her parents' future amusement; and thus repaying her generous grandfather, and her kind mother, for the pains and expence of the liberal education their indulgence had bestowed upon her. She had daily employed her pencil since her arrival at the convent, and was rewarded for her labours by the satisfaction they had afforded her dear friend Rosaline, whose encouraging voice stimulated her to new toils and exertions of genius. Erina had a high opinion of the taste of Lady Kinross, and was flattered by her commendations, with the idea of daily improvement. The praises now bestowed by Seraphina confirmed Erina in her hopes of attaining eminence in the art of painting, and of delighting Sir Phelim and her mother with the testimony of her ardent desire to evince, in every possible way, her filial duty and affection. And when she saw Seraphina's melancholy beguiled by the review

of those designs selected for her amusement, and beheld the smile of sweet benovolence, and the flush of exultation, light up the countenance of Rosaline on perceiving the gratification Seraphina experienced from beholding the paintings she shewed her, Erina felt a delight beyond expression, but which may be conceived by those refined and ardent souls, whose purest raptures arise from the communication of joy to others.

A desire to prolong the entertainment of Seraphina, and to increase her pleasure, prompted Erina to request Lady Kinross would sit down to the piano-forte; which Rosaline hastened to do, in immediate compliance with her friend's entreaty. She had never played with more brilliant execution, so much taste, or equal expression, as her wish of pleasing Erina and Seraphina inspired; the latter of whom was delighted equally by the talents of Rosaline and Erina, and those admirable and engaging dispositions they evinced, which a heart of sensibility must feel, and an exalted soul ever hold in highest estimation; for virtue seeks and loves to find congenial minds.

Seraphina elegantly complimented Lady Kinross on her execution of the piece, expressed a passionate

fondness for music, and spoke of it with so much taste and science, that Rosaline and Erina were persuaded she was an admirable performer ; and solicited her to favour them, by a proof of that musical skill to which their expectations had been raised. Seraphina felt herself bound to do all in her power, at the request of those, who, by the exertion of their talents, had afforded her such extreme delight. She, therefore, immediately sat down to the piano-forte, and touched it with all the grace of expression, in a plaintive air, which she accompanied with her voice : it was powerful, yet soft ; and she gave the affecting melody all the graces with which exquisite taste can adorn harmony. The song was Spanish, and the dulcet tones of Seraphina's voice added sweetness to the sounds of a language, that combines the Italian softness with superior loftiness of expression. Seraphina's noble mien, in which the grandeur of exalted rank spoke her birth pre-eminently high, and the seraphic expression of her fine countenance, charmed Rosaline and Erina so much, that as they stood on each side of her at the instrument, they regarded her with an enthusiastic admiration ; and each, impelled by an energetic impulse, bestowed on her a kiss of thanks ; which declared to Seraphina's warm

and comprehensive mind, Rosaline's and Erina's gratitude, delight, and praise, beyond the power of language to express.

Seraphina, rising from the piano-forte, requested Erina to take her place, and favour her with some more music, either vocal or instrumental; assuring her two new friends, that they could not furnish her with a more exquisite enjoyment than by singing an Italian duet, as she was particularly fond of Italian composition. "I only performed a Spanish air," added Seraphina, "because I imagined it would be a novelty to you; the Italians certainly surpass the Spaniards in musical taste: however, if you wish to hear more Spanish music, I will afford you an opportunity of judging of it, by performing it in the true style upon the mandoline."

This obliging offer, and the engaging manner in which it was made, inspired the amiable Rosaline and Erina with increased admiration and affection for the charming Seraphina, to whom they paid every suitable return of thanks; and, with the most ardent desire to please their new friend, they sung their finest Italian duet, accompanied by the harmonious accords of Erina's harp.

Whilst Lady Kinross and Erina endeavoured to give all possible taste and pathos to their performance, they perceived Seraphina affected, even to tears ; and, as she wept in silence, there was an expression in her angelic countenance that melted them to tenderest sympathy.

At the conclusion of the strain, Seraphina dried her tears, and attempted to be cheerful, in order to hide the emotion she could scarcely repress.

Lady Kinross and Erina tried in vain to raise her drooping spirits, but observing that the struggle of her mind was painful to her, they forbore to press her stay when she offered to depart. The two friends, however, took the most affectionate leave of Seraphina ; who inviting them to her apartment on the following evening, promised the solicited entertainment of her mandoline.

The next evening, after vespers, Rosaline and Erina accompanied Seraphina to her chamber. Although neither so spacious nor elegant as the saloon Lady Kinross inhabited, it was neat and well furnished ; but the gloom of the convent pervaded the apartment, as it was but faintly

lighted by a casement, the heavy arches of which threw a deep shade across the few rays of the evening now declining into twilight.

Seraphina sighed heavily as she entered the room, then cordially welcoming her two guests, she embraced them each, and handed them, with dignified courtesy, to a sofa, and seated herself between Rosaline and Erina; then taking her mandoline from the table where it lay with some music, tuned her instrument, and sweeping its strings in soft prelude, began an air, accompanying its plaintive melody with the sweet accords of her charming voice. The strain of harmony was so expressive, her taste gave such pathos to the words, and her looks were so touching, that although the verses of the song were but very imperfectly explained to Rosaline's and Erina's attention, by the affinity they found between the Spanish and Italian languages, yet they both dissolved into tears as they gazed on the musician, and read in her lovely countenance a tale of secret sorrow preying on youthful beauty and virtue. The last ray of evening beamed on Seraphina's cheek, wet with the tears that shone tremblingly lustrous in her soft yet brilliant eyes; and, as the gentle Erina watched the interesting expression of her face, and saw the drops of sorrow glistening in

their silent descent, whilst sentiment spoke in every feature, the amiable girl's tenderest feelings sympathized with Seraphina's affliction; and, perceiving Rosaline equally moved, and encircling Seraphina in her arms, Erina's energetic soul impelled her to kiss away the tears that stood impearled on the cheeks of the sweet musician, whose strains had struck the strings of sensibility's most affecting chords.

Seraphina came to the concluding cadence of her air as Rosaline passed her arm around her waist, and Erina's lips were pressed to her cheek. The music which had so forcibly moved their feelings, had also awakened Seraphina's acutest sensibility, which was now susceptible of the deep impression Rosaline's and Erina's touching endearments were calculated to make on the tender heart of Seraphina the whole energy of whose soul was roused from the torpor of hopeless grief, to receive the consolation tenderest friendship can bestow by most endearing sympathy; and Seraphina's bosom expanding with the powerful feelings of strongest gratitude, and warmed to the highest glow of affection, she tenderly embraced the gently consoling Rosaline, clasping her to her heart; whilst a kiss, impressed upon the cheek of Erina, and tears dropping on her bosom, as

Seraphina's head reclined in the full confidence of amity upon her shoulder, declared, that the enthusiastic affection, and the interest so strongly expressed by Erina, were deeply felt, and ardently repaired, by the energetic soul of Seraphina.

Her sensations were too powerful for utterance ; but putting aside the mandoline, she seized a hand of Rosaline and Erina, and, pressing them with ardour, she wept : her heart seemed bursting.— The gentle Lady Kinross again encircled Seraphina in her arms, who, sighing, returned the embrace of consolatory friendship ; whilst the animated Erina's expressive countenance spoke the sweetest language of comfort, and her angelic disposition prompted her to repeat the kiss of tenderest amity.

These reiterated testimonies of affection poured balm into the breaking heart of Seraphina. She felt her warmest thanks were due for the kindness of those on whose sympathy she could have no claims, except what benevolence chose to acknowledge and bestow as alms of christian charity.

Her gratitude sought utterance as its testimony, and in a voice rendered impressive by the delicacy and sensibility it evinced, she said, “ How can I

sufficiently thank you, amiable and beloved friends, for the consolation your tender sympathy affords an unhappy being, who, separated by cruel necessity, perhaps for ever, from the few connections her unfortunate situation permitted her to know, would feel herself destitute of all comfort without your society! An alien in this abode, exiled from my country, banished from my home, and separated from my relations, to whom I can never return, except by violating those principles of virtue and affection which obliged and bind me to the severest trial and the most painful sacrifice for their advantage, I should feel isolated in this community, and live a wretched existence, were I not blessed with your affection: in that I have found a refuge from despair; and in Rosaline and Erina my heart has found all the happiness this world can afford me."

At the conclusion of this speech, Seraphina wept convulsively, whilst Lady Kinross and Erina endeavoured to tranquillize her grief. "Dearest Seraphina," cried each, in gentlest accents, "compose yourself."

"In me," said Rosaline, "behold a friend ready to supply, by every tender office, the care and solicitude of those connections from whom

a cruel fate has separated you. Heaven's bounty has blessed me with affluence ; there is no gratification, attendant on fortune, equal to the privilege of conferring happiness, and ensuring the purest enjoyment, by sharing the good we possess with those who are left less fortunate than ourselves. I am English by birth ; but fate has fixed my abode in this country. How rejoiced should I be if, by your becoming the constant companion of my life, I should be as successful, as I desire, in rendering your residence in this kingdom less like an exile than an home ; to which my heart will welcome you from this dwelling to mine with all the affection of nearest consanguinity."

Seraphina, weeping, embraced Rosaline, to express thanks too great for utterance.

" Happy Rosaline !" cried Erina, " to possess so fully the power of rendering consolation to Seraphina. I can only emulate in wishes, to afford her happiness: but if sympathy and affection can sooth your grief, my dear Seraphina, my heart will be ever assiduous in giving you all the comfort that can arise from the sincerest sentiments of animated friendship, not only whilst I remain here, but in my own country ; to the latest hour of my life one of its first duties I shall consider

holding frequent intercourse with you by an uninterrupted correspondence.

“ Although Rosaline’s destiny fixes her home in France, I will fondly cherish the hope, that friendship may induce her to visit Ireland ; and in so, I will not despair of embracing, in my native land, two friends to whom my heart has devoted its first vows of amity.

“ Rosaline was the first companion of my youth, whom I called by the sacred and endearing title of friend ; you, my beloved Seraphina, are the second ; let us then form a triple alliance of sisterly affection, by which each of us will be bound to the other by a double tie : I will love Rosaline for her own virtues, and feel more strongly attached to her because Seraphina is equally dear to her as to me : and, in my second friend, shall be concentrated the affection I bear my first ; for Seraphina may, and ought, to love Rosaline as my dearest friend. I can only claim a second place in Seraphina’s regard ; Rosaline’s demands, on that regard, as the companion of her life, must be the greatest, and, therefore, I must yield to superior claims, founded on acts of real kindness : mine can be merely in wishes and in affection ; but I will flatter myself, that to the first friend of Rosaline,

Seraphina will repay an attachment with congenial sentiments; and that I shall be doubly endeared to Rosaline for Seraphina's sake."

Erina's address, although it affected Seraphina with innumerable powerful emotions, allowed her time to collect herself sufficiently for the reply such tenderly kind offers merited; and, warmly pressing the hands of Rosaline and Erina, she said, "My heart receives, with the most grateful sentiments, those testimonies of true and lively friendship which will form the pride and happiness of my life. Never, while I have existence, can I forget the obligations I owe to Lady Kinross and Erina: although fate prevents my accepting the generous asylum affection offers me as a refuge from a dull abode, which necessity makes my home, yet its deariness will be cheered by the friendship I have here enjoyed; and when no longer blessed by the presence of Rosaline and Erina, the occasional visits, which pity and affection will induce the kind Lady Kinross to allow me, and the letters that Erina's tenderness will urge her to afford her late companion in the convent, will render it a bearable retreat from a world whence I must be totally banished by prudence and duty."

Dun twilight now invested the dark chamber

in the shades of night, and Seraphina's sighs alone disturbed the silence reigning around in the cloisters of the nunnery. At length an advancing footstep was heard, and one of the sisterhood entered with a lamp.

Seraphina dried her tears, and rose to greet the nun, whose constant attentions had long been assiduously paid to console the young afflicted stranger. " My good Agnes," cried Seraphina, " you come with benevolence, as usual, to cheer the solitude and evening gloom of my chamber ; and my soul thanks you for the offices of christian charity which send you daily to me as the minister of celestial mercy."

The enthusiastic Erina, who delighted in acts of beneficence, read in the countenance of Agnes the engaging expression of goodness ; and repaid the amiable nun's kindness to Seraphina with the highest esteem, and a regard, equally grateful as if the attentions paid to the afflicted girl had been shewn to herself ; for Erina's sensibility was more alive to sympathize with others than to feel for herself.

At the invitation of Seraphina, Agnes was prevailed on to join the party, and afforded

Rosaline and Erina an opportunity of forming a better acquaintance with her than their daily interviews with her, amongst the sisterhood, admitted.

Agnes was in the prime of life, but the bloom of youth was faded by delicate health, and the seriousness of her order suppressed the gaiety once natural to her; but through the evident dejection portrayed in her countenance, the expression of pious resignation beamed a kind of beauty dependant on sanctity; and the placidity of her manners was as engaging to sentiment as the most entertaining cheerfulness.

The conversation was agreeable, though far from lively; and the supper-bell summoning them to the refectory, broke up the meeting in Seraphina's chamber; which she solicited her three friends to honour soon again with their presence.

Rosaline and Erina was so earnest in their wish of consoling Seraphina, and so desirous of improving their acquaintance with sister Agnes, that a pressing invitation, given for the following evening, assembled the four associates in Lady Kinross's saloon; where she and her amiable com-

panion did every thing in their power to amuse and cheer the two dejected visitors.

In compliance with Seraphina's entreaty, Rosaline and Erina sung a duet, with the accompaniment of the piano-forte; Lady Kinross played a difficult piece on that instrument, which was followed by a double lesson; and the music concluded with a grand *duo* for the harp and piano-forte, in which Rosaline's brilliant execution, and Erina's exquisite taste and expression, gave all the charms to harmony of which it could be susceptible: they were not, however, so absorbed by the difficulty of their performance as to be insensible to the effect of their touching melody on their two auditors, each of whom was affected even to tears. Seraphina wept with all the sorrow recent misfortunes inspire, while the tranquil sadness of Agnes was evinced by a few silently descending drops settled melancholy pays as an occasional tribute to griefs long past, the remembrance of which, ever engraven on the heart, subdues it to composed affliction, unless circumstances throw on the imagination the light of former pleasure, of which the picture still remains upon the fancy, and sensibility draws the comparison between retrospective happiness and present woe.

Erina, who was concerned to see the traces of sorrow on the countenance of her two visitors, proposed that Lady Kinross should amuse them from the melancholy recollections music awakened, by the gay variety of her tambourine dance ; and the amiable Rosaline, equally desirous as Erina to entertain her guests, complied with her friend's request, and, summoning all her liveliest graces to inspire her steps and movements to afford delight, she tripped the sportive measures with a sprightliness it was impossible to see without a participation of her cheerfulness.

At the conclusion of the dance, Seraphina complimented Lady Kinross upon the charming exhibition with which she had favoured her friends ; and Agnes also expressed her admiration and thanks in the most animated manner. “ I used to love dancing,” she cried, with a sigh, “ but it is long since I enjoyed that pleasure. The gaieties of life are, however, amongst the smallest sacrifices I have been compelled to make ; yet the vows I have taken prohibit the least regret of the world I have been obliged to resign ; and it is only permitted me to lament how ill I fulfil the oaths I have taken. May you, my friends, never like me have occasion to repent the daily infringe-

ment of sacred obligations, nor find your duty at variance with inclination !”

This address renewed the tears of the dejected Seraphina, as if some mental sensation had applied the situation of the unhappy Agnes to her own case. The gentle Erina's comprehensive soul caught the sentiments of Seraphina by intellectual sensibility, and prompted by an earnest wish to sooth the sufferers, she kindly seized a hand of each, and gently pressing them to her feeling heart, she said, in soft accents of consolatory affection, “ *When surrounded by pleasures, we should in the midst of our enjoyments consider them as trials greater, as they are more seductive to virtue, than misfortunes; and when affliction oppresses us, we may ever find consolation in the idea, that this life is but a passage to that world, where pious resignation under the severest woes will be rewarded by an eternity of felicity.*”

CHAP. V.

“ One false clandestine step, taken with the most innocent intentions, must be followed by consequences fatal to rigid integrity, and to that sweet peace of mind which can only originate from the consciousness of unsullied candour, and actions perfectly free from the slightest stain, even of prudent prevarication and necessary dissimulation: for the infringement of truth, or even its evasion, is like the flaw in diamonds, that dims their radiance, and diminishes the value of nature’s purest, most admirably beautiful, and most precious production.”

“ YOU cannot condemn me more than I condemn myself,” said Agnes, “ for a species of unhappiness, which religion tells me is murmuring against the decrees of Heaven; for true christianity requires perfect contentment in all situations; and to be in the least discontented with one’s lot in life, must be termed repining at the will of Providence. I strive as much as possible to avoid this crime,

and pray for strength, superior to my own, to vanquish errors, which, by hourly contrition and repentance, I endeavour to expiate.

“ The history of my misfortunes, however, will prove, in the difficulty of my task, some excuse for its imperfect performance; and, as I am anxious not to lose entirely a place in your regard, I hope to interest you by pity, where I may fail to do it by esteem.”

“ Whatever alleviation, confidence, and tender commiseration can afford,” replied the gentle Erina, “ my heart is ready to bestow.” And Agnes, encouraged by her kindness, and the sweet invitation to lay her griefs open to friendship’s consolation, expressed in the mild accents and soft looks of Lady Kinross, began the narrative of her story in the following words:—

“ My father, the Baron de Vermont, noble by birth, but ill provided with fortune, had a son and two daughters, of whom I am the youngest.

“ To ensure my brother his whole patrimony, my sister and I were doomed to a monastic seclusion, and spent our childhood in this convent; to which, from my earliest abode in it, I imbibed a rooted

aversion, as the place destined for my constant seclusion from a world, of the pleasures of which I had formed the most charming ideas. The perversion of our natures invariably leads us to fancy happiness exclusively in those situations it is impossible for us to attain; and it is only in the experience of their insufficiency for felicity, that human reason can be corrected of the folly of imagination, that seduces the heart by fallacious flattery, to believe the certainty of bliss in the fruition of our wishes.

“ When I was about fifteen, the sudden death of my brother, who was four years older than me, threw my parents into the utmost grief; and my sister and myself were taken home to cheer our father and mother, after the loss of their only son.

“ During a year’s abode under the paternal roof, the endearments I experienced induced me to believe, that every idea of immuring me in a convent had been laid aside at the decease of my brother. I frequently shudder at the retrospection of the unnatural insensibility I felt at the removal of the cause which had suggested the plan of my confinement for life; and I am

confirmed in the opinion, that my present destiny has been fixed by Divine justice, as a punishment for repinings and sinful wishes; which experience shews us daily, almost to a demonstrable certainty, are attended by the temporary chastisement they merit, since, even the possession of illegitimate desires, are equally fatal to our happiness as their disappointment could have been.

“ At the expiration of the mourning for my deceased brother, our house became a scene of gaiety, which novelty rendered inexpressibly delightful to me, whose natural volatility had been sharpened, rather than blunted, to a sense of pleasure, by a total privation of its enjoyment.

“ The birth and situation of my father made him a character of consequence, although he was not a wealthy man, and our circle of acquaintance was widely spread amongst the highest class of nobility.

“ My sister Victoire, one year older than me, was extremely handsome, tolerably accomplished, and endued with a wit that universally charmed. Her beauty and agreeable qualities drew around

her many admirers ; from amongst whom her heart made a choice, and the second son of the Count de la Villebrune became a favoured lover.

“ The family of this young man was in great favour ; and this circumstance rendered him a match superior to my sister’s pretensions, although his fortune, as a younger son, was but a slender income.

“ Considerations of interest induced the count to discourage the union of his son with the object of his love ; and Victoire and her lover became miserable at the idea, that parental commands would sever them for ever. In the extremity of despair, young Amadis threw himself at his father’s feet, to deprecate the fatal sentence of separation from his beloved : and the Count de la Villebrune, moved by the intercession of his favourite son, his long friendship for my father, and his esteem of Victoire, was prevailed on to assent to the marriage, under certain indispensable conditions ; which, however, he did not communicate to his son, but contented himself with explaining to my father.

“ After a conference between the parents of the parties, the young couple were informed that

arrangements had been made for their union, but that it could not prudently take place for a twelvemonth ; during which time Amadis was to remain with his regiment, in the south of France.

“ The attachment between my sister and her lover was of the tenderest nature ; and the prospect of their separation for a year, which ardent love computed as an age, would most severely have afflicted them, had not the hopes of a reunion, never more to part, consoled their sorrowful hearts.

“ Victoire, having from infancy been my constant companion, felt for me the most animated sisterly affection. Her amiable qualities, her continual kindness for me, and, above all, her having, from my childhood, been the partner of a lot I considered most unfortunate, had endeared her inexpressibly to me ; and there subsisted so thorough a mutual confidence between us, that every thought was reciprocally revealed. All her sentiments for Amadis, each speech of his to her in secret, were known to me ; and every impassioned interview that took place previous to their parting, passed before me as a witness of their ardent, pure, and hallowed love ; and when Vic-

toire and her lover separated, each made me a record of their plighted vows of eternal constancy.

“ My heart was warm, my fancy was romantic, and I imagined human happiness centered alone in the connubial union of souls, and that, in attaching to me, by that tie, a congenial mind, I might boldly bid defiance to mortal woe. Fatal mistake ! since from it originates the aggravation of my wretched situation, which, without that unfortunate illusion, might have been tolerable ; whereas I am now plunged in an abyss of insufferable torment, and endure incessant miseries of the nearest connections, added to the tortures of my own despair.

“ The relatives of the Count de la Villebrune, out of respect to him, were assiduous in shewing every possible attention to the family about to form an alliance with their’s ; and innumerable festivities were given in compliment to Victoire. At those entertainments I was always one of the guests, and amongst those most noticed in honour of my sister, the intended bride of Amadis.

“ At that period, now ten years since, I was

in the prime of those good looks which must ever attend on the bloom of youth, even should beauty be deficient; the height of my girlish vanity never flattered me sufficiently to persuade me I was handsome, though several youths complimented me with the title of a beauty.

“ Amongst those who professed themselves an admirer, was the young Viscount de Beaumanoir; and his figure, talents, address, and disposition, distinguished him too pre-eminently for me to be insensible to merits far surpassing those of every youth I had ever seen; for the handsome and amiable Amadis himself was much inferior to the viscount in every respect. He was then just nineteen, had completed his education, and was superlatively engaging. By the death of his father he had, at that early age, acceded to an ancient title, and a considerable fortune; but his youth kept him still in tutelage to his mother and an uncle, to whose guardianship he had been committed by the will of his father, while the law considered him a minor.

“ The Viscountess du Beaumanoir was maternal aunt to Amadis de la Villebrune; and her nearness of affinity to him made her so attentive to our family, that the viscount was continually

thrown into company with me, both by innumerable mutual invitations, and that course of intimate association that takes place between houses nearly connected.

“ In these frequent interviews, young de Beaumanoir conceived a passion for me, which was too violent to be concealed from its object, and too flattering not to excite congenial sentiments in return. These, on each side, although mutually discovered, were hid in closest secrecy from every being, except Victoire. Her extreme youth, and consequent inexperience of the world, added to her situation, that induced her to consider love as the first happiness and greatest blessing of existence, prompted my innocent sister and confidant to encourage, rather than repress, sentiments, which can only lead to felicity when under the direction of prudence.

“ In the daily opportunities that afforded unnoticed meetings between my lover and me, he persuaded me to listen complacently to proposals for our union. Although a child in sense, my principles were sufficiently matured to make me revolt at the idea of a secret intercourse with du Beaumanoir, had he not assured me, that the discovery

of his attachment to me would irreparably destroy his happiness.

“ My mother,” said the viscount, “ is a woman of excessive pride, and has opened to me plans for my aggrandizement, which I am confident it would be impossible for any one to induce her to relinquish : her views for me are in direct opposition to every prospect of felicity ; and you only, my adored Elize,” said he, falling at my feet, “ can rescue me from the wretched fate prepared for me. There is a hateful marriage between me and Mademoiselle de Bois, concerted by our respective families ; you know her horrid deformity, my beloved Elize, and

st be sensible that, independent of my attachment to your perfections, it would be misery for me to be united to a woman who has nothing to recommend her but immense riches. Those have been the lures by which my mother and uncle are induced to wish an union agreeable to the relations of the heiress ; who are anxious for an alliance, by which title and interest can be purchased by wealth. My fortune, though handsome, is not as great as that many men of noble birth possess ; and as their riches need not the accumulation of the property Mademoiselle

de Bois will bring as her dowry, it would be rejected by most of our nobility, because it is the portion of a disgusting object.

“ My soul abhors her !” cried du Beaumanoir ; ‘ and if you have the smallest compassion for a lover who adores you, my charming Elize, you will save me from the detestable sacrifice which dooms me the wretched victim of avarice.’

“ How can I save you ?” demanded I, with emotion ; ‘ I would give my life to serve you, but, alas ! I have no power to second my wishes.’

“ My mother,” replied the viscount, ‘ is equally violent as she is fond of money ; and my guardian is so entirely ruled by her, that I could never obtain consent for our union. For some years to come my father’s will subjects me completely to the direction and controul of my uncle : to solicit his permission to address you, my beloved Elize, would only be affording him the means to prohibit my ever seeing you more ; and since you have blessed me by the confession, that you are not indifferent to my happiness, I may venture to hope you will not betray me into the power of those whom the law would authorize to compel

me to the most cruel sacrifice. To relinquish you, and instantly espouse the object of my fixed aversion, would be the sentence to which I should be obliged to submit, were my attachment to you discovered.'

"Never, never," cried I, 'shall your affection for me be repaid by treachery! Although your attachment to me is the pride of my heart, and would be the glory of my life, it shall ever be hid in closest secrecy, since your happiness depends upon its concealment.'

"My empasioned lover kissed my hand in grateful acknowledgment of the tender sentiments I had expressed; and seized that moment of ardour to propose a clandestine union with me. Every principle of feminine delicacy and timidity rose in opposition to this overture; whilst du Beaumanoir pleaded the cause of his wishes with so much passion and eloquence, that, unable to refuse his suit, I was obliged to fly his presence, in order to ensure the resistance prudence prompted my reason to make against the desires of my heart.

"Confident of my own strength, I again braved

temptation, by trusting myself to a secret meeting with my lover. More empassioned, more eloquent, than on our former interview, I was persuaded to believe that honour, gratitude, and even religion, required my assent to the proposals of du Beaumanoir, when he represented to me that although the laws delegated to his uncle a controuling power over his minority, yet, by the rights of nature, he was at liberty to dispose of his heart and hand.

“ Reject them not, therefore, my Elize,” said du Beaumanoir; “ but consent to bless me, by receiving my vows, and plighting your faith to me in secret at the sacred altar! Our bonds, thus formed, must be concealed until I am of age to assume independence: then, to the world, I will proudly boast myself your slave, and glory in fetters too strong and sanctified to be unforged by human power. By this means only can Elize save her devoted lover.

“ Our marriage, like our love, may be concealed, except from Victoire, the priest who gives the nuptial benediction, and those assistants at the ceremony, who may be requisite to give it validity. I will undertake to arrange every thing in the surest and most clandestine manner, so that

suspicion itself might sleep secure upon our purposes.

“ Possessed of my heart's treasure, I shall repose in peace, and shall be sufficiently tranquil to take every possible measure at once to avoid the observation of my friends, whilst I obtain time and opportunity to assert my emancipation from their controul and legal power over my actions.’

“ Thus spoke the ardent youth according to his hopes, and gained both my belief and my assent to his wishes ; for my sister's advice coincided with his persuasion and the inclination of my heart.

“ When matters had been arranged for the completion of our plan, with maiden timidity, increased by the severe checks of prudence and filial duty, which whispered to my trembling conscience, that a clandestine marriage, formed without the blessing of consenting relatives, and the approving voice of parental authority to sanction the heart in its enjoyments, was but half hallowed by the nuptial benediction, although it bound us at the sacred altar by all the legal ceremonies of the holy church.

“ Thus impressed with a secret and indefinable awe at the solemnity, I felt but half united to du Beaumanoir ; who, more empassioned and courageous than I could be, kindly chided and rallied me on repressing his felicity by my insensibility to it.

“ Never, indeed, had any one formed a voluntary union with less happiness. My joy was nipped in the bud by chilling apprehension, that, like a blight in the spring, withered up every flower of fond expectation, which the sun-beams of hope should have unfolded to bloom and maturity.

“ After the first tumultuous sensations had subsided, attendant on a step so daring in a youthful virgin, who, from the vestal state of religious celibacy, had plunged into all the anxious cares of the wedded life, unadvised, except by those whose years were too inexperienced, and whose judgments were too deeply interested in the act, to see clearly all the consequences that might originate from it, I reflected without intermission on my situation ; and, with astonishment, beheld myself in the possession of all I had once fan-

cied essential to felicity, yet less happy than when I was in despair of ever attaining my wishes.

“ The first desire of my youth had been, a liberation from the dreary seclusion of a monastic situation. I was now emancipated from the convent ; and the parental authority, which, in my childhood, had doomed me to receive the religious habit, soon after my brother's decease, voluntarily assured me that I was no longer destined to assume the veil.

“ The world, and all its gaieties, opened, in the full brilliancy of novelty, upon my youthful view of sanguine hope ; and all the expectations lively fancy had pourtrayed of ardent love, of connubial blessedness, seemed stretched before my sight in the perspective of my future days. I was beloved by the handsomest, the most accomplished, the most virtuous nobleman, rising to distinction at the splendid court of Versailles. His honours, his celebrity, and the chief goods of fortune, were already laid at my feet in a rich store for my enjoyment, a few years from that period marked in love's calendar in the golden register of hymeneal vows ; and possession, which some say invariably cools the ardour of sentiment,

appeared to me to increase daily the delicacy of 'du Beaumanoir's passion, and the enthusiasm of my attachment: yet neither of us were contented; for, although frequently together, experiencing fresh delight in every daily interview, we were dissatisfied at the cruel necessity of constant separation. It is thus that human desires strengthen and multiply in proportion to the greatness and frequency of indulgence.

“ Shortly after my marriage, I had the prospect of adding the maternal title to that of wife. This event, which to most couples, tenderly attached, ought naturally to increase their joy by pleasing expectation, was to me and the viscount a source of affliction in the accumulation of that anxious terror, which, like the noisome pestilence, threatening whole regions with a mortal plague, hung, in a lowering cloud, over our present days and future prospects.

“ We had never anticipated this occurrence, and consequently had never foreseen the probability of a discovery of our secret union by such means, until apprehension of its unfortunate consequences could have no other effect but to alarm us with dreadful, yet useless fears.

“ The alteration in my situation sensibly affected both my health and looks. My mother became so seriously uneasy at the change of my constitution and appearance, that she insisted on having medical advice for me : I resisted her entreaties to permit a physician to attend me, until it was impossible any longer to withstand her solicitations on the subject ; and I was at length compelled to submit myself to interrogations, which ascertained a supposed necessity for the application of remedies destructive to my health.

“ A sense of propriety and delicacy, that had made me anxious to avoid every examination relative to my situation, prompted me to despicable subterfuges, requisite for the concealment of my condition, and the preservation of my life : the law of necessity alone could absolve me to my conscience for the violation of those refined feelings that constitute strict delicacy of honour ; and in compulsory evasion I learned, by terrible experience, that *one false clandestine step, taken with the most innocent intentions, must be followed by consequences fatal to rigid integrity, and to that sweet peace of mind, which can only originate from the consciousness of unsullied candour, and actions perfectly free from the*

slightest stain, even of prudent prevarication and necessary dissimulation: for the infringement of truth, or even its evasion, is like the flaw in the diamond, that dims its radiance, and diminishes the value of nature's purest, most admirably beautiful, and most precious production."

CHAP. VI.

"Whoever acts imprudently, and gives occasion to suspicion, merits not only censure, but, by giving a latitude to scandal, deserves the severest reproaches."

THE grief Agnes evinced during the recital of her tale, increased as she proceeded to the most affecting part of her narrative; and a deep sense of remorse seemed to increase the weight of her affliction. "Misfortunes, increased by our own errors," said the nun, "are the most difficult to be endured: the severest evils that can befall us, when not aggravated by imprudence, are supportable; whereas the slightest ill, occasioned by our own fault, causes an incessant self-reproach and condemnation. The criminal who escapes prosecution is continually pursued by the terrors of conviction; whilst innocence, unjustly accused, faces his judges unappalled, and trembles not

even under the hand of the executioner, like the guilty wretch who feels his punishment is merited.

“ Like a culprit before the tribunal, I shrunk at the approach of the physician, whom my mother’s anxious care summoned daily to prescribe for me. His astonishment was extreme on finding his remedies ineffectual towards my recovery; and, ignorant of the deception I employed in receiving medicines without taking any of them, he pronounced my case at length to be hopeless.

“ Never shall I forget the complicated misery of my sensations,—the hourly fear of a discovery both of my duplicity and undutifulness! But those apprehensions, although terrible, were less dreadful than the constant view of my parents’ unhappiness on my account: their affectionate solicitude about me, contrasted with my conduct towards them, overwhelmed me with shame and despair; in the violent paroxysms of which I was frequently tempted to the impious wish of death, to be relieved from the horror of a situation in which every moment increased the difficulty of concealing my error, and at the same time accelerated the period when it would

be impossible to avoid its detection. Amidst an hourly accumulation of terror, the dreaded period arrived that made me mother to a son.—The mental agonies of that hour far surpassed all corporeal suffering, aggravated to the extremest danger by the miseries of my distracted mind. Its constant agitation, increasing for eight months, weakened me too much to admit of my completing the full time, and my infant entered a miserable life one month sooner than was requisite to acquire sufficient strength to enjoy a healthy existence. Unhappy babe! doomed, by thy parents' imprudence, to be the heir of nothing but misfortune from thy very cradle!"

Agnes wept bitterly at this part of her narrative, and continued—"Amidst the complicated sufferings of a dangerous delivery, I had to declare, whilst covered with confusion, that I was secretly married. Fortunately I had so much prudence as not to discover that my sister had been the confidant and adviser of my conduct; for I was sensible that, although it might have extenuated my error, to have confessed myself induced to it by Victoire's concurrence and counsel, I should be acting a base part to excuse myself by implicating her in my disgrace. I preferred encountering singly, and totally unarmed for self-

defence, the bitter reproaches of my mother, and the violent anger of my father, who vowed, in the height of his rage, to challenge the man who had ruined me, and never end the combat till he was disabled by a mortal wound, or to avenge himself by the fall of the villain who had seduced me from my filial allegiance, and thus brought dishonour on his family.

“ I knew my father’s spirit, and doubted not his resolution to effect his threats to their full extent; and I chose rather to endure the humiliating supposition, and the harsh revilings my incensed parents heaped upon me, from the persuasion that I had degraded myself by a connection too mean to own, than expose my father and husband to each other’s swords, by the avowal of having united myself to a nobleman greatly my family’s superior both in rank and fortune.

“ But although I had determination sufficient to submit to the most poignant hourly mortifications, and the cruellest rebukes, by concealing the quality of my husband, lest it might point out the Viscount du Beaumanoir to my father’s suspicion, and consequent vengeance, yet a dread of his discovering who my husband was, from the

researches my parents made for that purpose, prevented my obtaining the repose absolutely essential to my recovery from the extreme danger originating in the tumult of my feelings ; and the despair of my life, which my husband learned by the frequent intelligence his anxiety procured in a secret channel, through my sister's means, put him so completely on the rack, that, nearly reduced to a state of insanity by despair, he was incapable of hiding his emotion, especially when my name was mentioned before him, which was the natural result of the intimacy subsisting between our respective families : in consequence of that relation, the story of my situation was known to the Viscountess du Beaumanoir, and became frequently the topic of conversation and wonder in my husband's presence ; and the agitation he evinced when my death was spoken of as an event which must certainly soon occur, too plainly revealed the connection by which our fates were inseparably united.

“ The discovery of our marriage was succeeded by a violent burst of rage on the part of the Viscountess du Beaumanoir ; who, in the union of her son with me, saw the frustration of her earnest wishes in aggrandizing him by a match with the rich heiress, whom avarice and interested views had

already affianced to my husband, previous to his acquaintance with me.

“ Nothing but the prospect of my immediate decease could have pacified the mother of du Beaumanoir ; who, by his guardian’s authority, was peremptorily prohibited even an epistolary intercourse with me, and was so strictly watched, that it became absolutely impossible for him to elude the vigilance of his mother’s and uncle’s spies.

“ My parents soon were apprized of the Viscountess du Beaumanoir’s discovery, and of the violent manner in which it had irritated her. Although my father’s pride was somewhat gratified to find I had not degraded his family by a connection beneath my birth, yet his honour was wounded at the means through which I had made an alliance far superior to my pretensions, and his high spirit was piqued to think his daughter had married into a house unwilling to receive her.

“ The imminent danger that threatened my life, from the continual conflict of feelings I had for a length of time undergone, affected my parents so much, as they felt themselves, in some measure, accessory to the perilous state I was in, that they

relaxed from bitter reproaches into the most consolatory kindness ; and their constant care and renewed tenderness had the happiest effect in re-establishing my health. A sense of religion alone prevents me from repining at the prolongation of a life devoted to misery ; for piety, whilst it inculcates resignation, teaches us errors are ever attended by suffering proportioned to our faults, and that days, however sorrowful, cannot be useless, if spent in repentance. I merited not to be reserved for happiness, but for contrition, and the chastisement my imprudence and breach of filial duty deserved.

“ The intelligence of my daily recovery was most unwelcome to the avaricious, cruel, and violent mother of my husband ; and by the application of his guardian to the court of law, its irresistible edict effected that separation between the viscount and me which death had failed to accomplish. By a legal process, my marriage was annulled, having been formed by both the parties under age, and without the knowledge and consent of parents and guardians.

“ Thus deprived by an irreversible decree of any lawful claim to the protection of the man whom I had married, I experienced all the mi-

sery of an unhappy creature who is mother to an illegitimate child.

“The time appointed for my sister’s union with Amadis arrived, and the mother and guardian of the Viscount du Beaumanoir informed my father, that unless I were compelled to assume the veil, in order to prevent the possibility of any future connection between the viscount and me, that all their interest with the family of the Count de la Villebrune should be employed to prevent the intended marriage of Amadis with Victoire.

“I now learned, that the conditions on which that alliance had been assented to on the part of the count, were the settlement of my father’s whole property on the young couple, and a mere trifling annuity out of it to me during my life, sufficient to pension me either in a convent, or any other cheap retirement I might choose.

“My sister was so sincerely attached to me as to feel quite miserable at the idea of my advantage having been sacrificed to the attainment of her marriage. Her affection and invariable tenderness to me, which inspired her with the most animated wishes for my happiness, would have been sufficient to determine me against any measure

that might have threatened, in the smallest degree, the felicity of her life ; which I was sensible depended on her union with Amadis. In order, therefore, to facilitate it, I evinced no reluctance to end my days in a monastic seclusion ; well aware that the influence of the vindictive Viscountess du Beaumanoir might have power to delay, if not entirely set aside, the marriage of her nephew with Victoire, in case I objected to assume the religious habit.

“ Deprived of all correspondence with du Beaumanoir, he seemed dead to me. Without a situation in the world, and deficient in the means of providing maternal care for my helpless infant, I was compelled to leave him to the attention of others, and entered this convent, to commence my noviciate when my sister’s lover led her to the hymeneal altar.

“ At the proper time for taking the veil, I assumed it in despair. The awful ceremony which was to exclude me from ever seeing again the being whom I still passionately loved, and to whom my soul felt as indissolubly united as ever, although the laws had rendered our marriage void, can better be conceived than described. The horrid solemnity of those vows my order administered to

me, chilled me to a state of corporeal torpidity, and of mental insensibility. Instead of taking the oaths of eternal divorce from the world, and total separation from every connection, I fainted at the altar, where my sister attended, bathed in tears of agonizing grief, that added to my own; and I only recovered my senses to find myself a devoted nun. Stripped of the gaudy apparel I had worn to increase the splendour of the ceremony, in which I was to resign for ever every pomp of the world, and, invested in the sable habit of a religious recluse, I embraced my sister, my father, and mother, commending to their care my orphaned babe. Never can time heal those bleeding wounds which lacerated my soul at the moment I saw myself entombed alive in the sepulchral gloom of this convent! No longer cheered by a sister's presence, I waste the hours in dismal lamentations over the memory of former times, and in incessant penitence for regrets my stubborn heart still harbours in rebellion to my reason, which tells me it is my duty to consider myself widowed, childless, and totally unconnected with all those relatives to whom my soul feels closely bound. In a constant state of ineffectual struggle between my unconquerable affections and my will, I spend my wretched life in a succession of sinning and repenting, experienc-

ing, unhappily, that seclusion from the world removes us not effectually from temptation to error, which lurks in every situation in the heart, to betray frail humanity from the allegiance of religious obedience.

“ Absent from every tie dear to my soul, I still find concentrated all the passions implanted in the human breast as springs of action ; not weakened by a removal from the busy scenes of life, but strengthened in their impulse by the narrow sphere which a variety of opposite characters counteract, and incessantly irritate each other in a close connection, and the most intimate intercourse, without the bonds of relationship, which forms a similarity of interest, or the union of friendship, that cements hearts in delightful agreement.

“ Forbidden, by the regulations of this abode, to maintain any correspondence with the world I have left, my thoughts hourly take the licence of presenting to my disturbed imagination the sufferings of the man, whom, at the sacred altar, I adjured Heaven to witness I would never forsake ; and of the forlorn state of my child, occasioned by the imprudence of those delegated by Divine authority as its protectors, who have been, by barba-

rous force, compelled to relinquish the duties nature and religion combine to inculcate in the human breast; making me a melancholy example, that the infringement of one moral principle hazards the breach of innumerable religious obligations; for, in the neglect of my filial duty, originated the inability of fulfilling those of a wife and a mother, which I imprudently engaged to perform, without considering the means of doing either with propriety or fidelity."

A flood of tears from the eyes of Rosaline, Erina, and Seraphina, paid the tribute of tender sympathy to Agnes, deeply affected by the recital of her tale.

The lively Lady Kinross, with smiles of affectionate consolation, endeavoured to dispel the dejection of the sorrowful nun; while the gentle Erina, wiping the tears from the eyes of sister Agnes, strove to cheer her spirits by professions of attachment, as an homage due to the amiable sentiments evinced in the narrative of her affecting story. Seraphina alone continued to weep, and declaring herself a sister in affliction, pressed the hand of Agnes, saying, "Fated, by similar necessity, to leave a world of sorrow, we may in this retreat live, perhaps, constant companions;

and, in consoling each other under irremediable griefs, feel grateful to the mercy of Heaven, which, under every affliction, bestows a counterpoising comfort, to prevent the pious mind from sinking to despair; and, in every situation, affords the christian soul a ray of celestial hope, that, brighter than the sun-beam darting from the firmament to light the storm-tossed mariner to a sheltered haven, shines on the heart amidst the woes of life, and points the mental sight to realms where faith will pilot the soul to eternal felicity."

Erina, seated between the nun and Seraphina, pressed a hand of each, and, in the silent eloquence of expressive looks, told them both, her heart would ever participate their feelings by the intercourse of sensibility, which no distance could interrupt in its offices of friendly sympathy. "When I leave this convent, this kingdom," cried Erina, while the tones of her voice declared to the soul more sentiment than language could convey to the ear, "my attachment will render Seraphina and sister Agnes ever present to my thoughts; and a constant intellectual intercourse shall render us mutually present, in spite of the leagues that separate us. Friendship, although it rejoices in the presence of its objects, has enjoyments even absence cannot deprive it of;

for the correspondence of minds need never be interrupted by distance, since letters can convey, in reciprocal communication of ideas and sensations, that essence we call the human spirit or soul. Our intellect, unconfined by our body, can, independent of it, range, on the wings of thought, creation's space. Often shall Erina's remembrance visit Seraphina and Agnes with tender affection, and recall her, by letters, to their fond recollection."

There was always a peculiar softness in Erina's voice and manner that endeared her indescribably to every heart, whilst the celestial expression beaming in her eyes, conveyed to the imagination an idea of her resemblance to those angelic spirits of heavenly purity, whom mortals call seraphic beings.

Her extraordinary beauty, her gentle and engaging manner, had, on her first entrance into the convent, pointed her out to the admiration of Agnes; who, upon acquaintance with her virtues, valued her for them, which esteem, which intimacy, and the lively interest she took in her sorrows, now ripened into an affection of the truest kind, that blended in it every sentiment which could attach her indissolubly to Erina.

Seraphina's friendship for that lovely girl was perfect as Erina's character, and had an energy which the force of Seraphina's mind gave to all her attachments. " Agnes, in the narrative of her life," said Seraphina, " has developed a heart which claims our love, and a strength of virtue that demands our respect: our affection, our esteem, are tributes we should be unjust to withhold from her ; but the friendship each here honour me with by professing for one whom tender indulgence alone considers worthy of regard, is not sufficient to satisfy a soul like mine, which, in the ardour of its feelings, requires sentiments in return, equally animated as those it cherishes for exalted merits and tender friends. I love Rosaline, Erina, and Agnes, for their admirable qualities, as much as for their kindness to me ; which calls upon me to open my character to their knowledge, since they have distinguished me by affection, that claims of honour some testimony that I am not unworthy of the regard I have been so happy as to inspire. In the disclosure of those events that mark my life, I am sensible nothing will shew me as a great character worthy of admiration. I shall hope, however, by a true recital and faithful exposure of my sentiments, to prove myself equally innocent as I am unfortunate, and thus establish myself in the pity and af-

fection of those whose esteem and love I am most anxious to retain."

"That you were unhappy, my dear Seraphina," said Rosaline, with tenderness, "was one motive, amongst many others, which made Erina and myself particularly assiduous in evincing for you the affection we felt due to those innumerable amiable qualities we perceived in you, notwithstanding the reserve in which you endeavoured to conceal yourself from observation."

"For that reserve, foreign from my nature," rejoined Seraphina, "I must both account and apologize, by declaring my peculiar situation renders it necessary. To declare *who* I am is absolutely impossible, from reasons of prudence, honour, and duty, which, on the subject of my extraction, must keep me entirely silent, even to such true and affectionate friends as each of you have proved since my abode amongst you. The constant and tender solitudes of Rosaline, Erina, and sister Agnes, to console me in griefs I have vainly strove to hide, induce me to lay open their source to an engaging confidence reposed in me, which binds me to the most lively gratitude; since both that confidence, and the friendship that gave birth to it, instead of being

encouraged on my part by a prepossessing frankness, that commonly engages esteem by appearing worthy of it, has been, on the contrary, repressed by a reserve in my conduct towards you all, which might have reasonably awakened suspicion of my being most unamiable. Perfectly sensible I must have shewn myself under very unfavourable colours to you all, my good friends, I am anxious to introduce my real character to you, and prove some title to the exalted affection with which I am honoured: if not on the score of virtue, at least by the most perfect reliance on your faithful friendship, I would claim it as my due, for a confidence that will indisputably convince you of my dependance on your honour, and that I have no reserve towards you, except what it imposes on me by its most delicate and strictest principles."

"Dear and amiable Seraphina," cried Erina energetically, "my eyes, at the first glance, read in your engaging countenance the features of a great and noble soul; and I attached myself to you with all the ardour I feel for virtue, and all the tenderness I ever experience for those who are deprived of the happiness I enjoy. To share your sorrows would have been a delightful, though a mournful office; and I have only ab-

stained from seeking the cause of your griefs, in order to share and lessen them by a friendly participation, by perceiving your desire to conceal your sufferings : my wish to learn them does not proceed from impertinent curiosity, but an anxiety to console you in affliction, which is frequently diminished by being confided to the faithful bosom of friendship."

Rosaline and Agnes, feeling that Erina had spoken their sentiments, took each a hand of Seraphina, and pressed it affectionately, to mark their participation in the kind interest Erina had expressed ; and Seraphina, who was perfectly versed in the language of sensibility, saw, in the looks of Lady Kinross and sister Agnes, a demonstration of faithful affection, of which it was impossible to doubt the truth.

Returning the pressure of their hands, and embracing Erina, Seraphina rose to depart, urging, that the night was too far advanced to take more hours from repose. " My story," said the amiable girl to her friends, " will beguile the tedious time of another evening ; and, if you will favour me by meeting in my chamber after supper to-morrow night, I shall willingly unfold to you all those particulars respecting my situation,

which my extraordinary circumstances admit of my disclosing."

Rosaline, Erina, and Agnes, promising to attend Seraphina at the appointed hour, took leave of her with the most endearing affection; and, accompanied by the nun, she quitted the saloon of Lady Kinross and her Irish friend with a sigh, expressive of the regret unavoidable at even a temporary separation from associates, who, to every charming social quality, joined those perfections of the heart, which form the most engaging companion, and the most admirable friend.

After their early supper on the succeeding evening, Rosaline, Erina, and sister Agnes repaired to the chamber of Seraphina, who, according to her promise, began the history of her life in the following manner :—

"The perceptions of my infant mind were awakened by an elegant abode, in which my childhood was attended by several genteel domestics, superintended by a respectable gentlewoman, whom I was taught to reverence as my governess: in addition to this office, she held that of companion to the lady of our household; who testified for

me the tenderest affection, and afforded me all a parent's kindest care.

“ As my faculties expanded, her beauty, her accomplishments, her graces, and especially her fondness for me, excited in my infant soul admiration, respect, and the most exalted filial attachment of which a child could be susceptible.

“ The name by which my governess was distinguished in the family was Senora Leonora; the appellation of my protectress was Donna Violante. The latter united the sedateness of maturity to the cheerfulness of youth; her demeanour was composed, but her mind was vivacious; her air was lofty, yet her manners had infinite condescension. The domestics revered her, her companion was attached to her beyond measure, and I idolized her. My chief pride was to please her, my highest ambition was to resemble her; and the whole study of my life was to behave so as to merit those praises and caresses she bestowed on me, for obedience and docility whenever she instructed me in any thing.

“ My governess, although apparently advanced in years, had a most pleasing countenance, the most agreeable manners, and, next to my pro-

tectress, I loved Senora Leonora. She taught me to read, to write, and to work; while Donna Violante instructed me in the Italian, French, and English languages, to touch the mandoline and use the pencil; endeavouring always to teach me the graces that adorned her manners and movements. My tuition was her chief employment. Our mornings were dedicated to various lessons, our evenings were passed in healthful pastimes, but not one moment was idly spent; for in the constant society of both my preceptresses, every instant was employed in the acquisition of some useful science, or the pursuit of some necessary and ornamental art.

“The system of my education was constant occupation, wherein attention to every requisite study was relieved by such a varying succession of application, that each employment became a recreation in its daily rotation.

“From my first use of speech, Spanish was the language most familiar to me, though I could express myself with fluency in the language of that country where I resided.

“Brought up in my native land as a foreigner, it is but lately I learned either my rank in life or

the kingdom of my birth ; and I was only informed of both to understand the painful necessity of concealing them from the knowledge of every person with the utmost care, under the severest penalties. Those penalties the sequel of my story will explain, and sufficiently excuse me to my nearest intimates and dearest friends for not revealing to them my name and nation, which the same cause rendered a mystery, even to myself, until I had attained an age when discretion might make it possible for me to act with secrecy, without incurring the danger of deceit, which a child may often confound with prudent reserve, and, from an endeavour to be discreet, practise prevarication, and occasionally run the hazard of falling into falsehood to avoid a breach of confidence.

“ Motives of that kind, with others of the same delicate nature, deterred my parents from making themselves known to me ; and I lived in entire ignorance of them, and of every circumstance concerning my birth, during the state of childhood ; when, although most awake to the observation of surrounding objects and daily occurrences, the mind is seldom occupied by that train of thought leading to the investigation of any thing purposely concealed from its enquiry.

“ Our abode was in a sylvan retreat ; it was a cottage, whose rustic walls were overgrown with mantling ivy and rich jessamine : embosomed in a thick wood, and concealed from view by overshadowing trees, round which woodbine hung in gay garlands, our rural dwelling could not be seen, even from the winding path leading to its enclosure through the surrounding forest. But notwithstanding it was hid amidst its luxuriantly embowering shades, from the enwreathed casements of our cottage the eye was directed through several glades to catch the distant prospect of extended hills, covered with woods, and variegated culture ; while the pastures in the forest were diversified by grazing herds and flocks of sheep. Their bleating, the lowing of cattle, the barking of the shepherd's dogs, with the rustling of the leaves around, and the notes of the feathered race of the groves, were the only sounds we heard in our sequestered retreat ; near which no traveller nor intruder came, except now and then a passing peasant, with his cur, or a wandering gipsy.

“ Of the world I knew nothing but from books, as I never stirred the distance of a mile from home, nor received any visitor in our retirement, except one gentleman, who came frequently to see us. He was in the prime of life, of a pleas-

ing exterior, and had the most insinuating deportment and conversation. He visited us always in the forenoon, unattended, and never remained later than our dinner hour, at which time he regularly took his leave, never staying to partake any refreshment, although he seemed to be on terms of intimate friendship with Donna Violante, and her companion ; who, with myself, were continually present at the interviews between my protectress and her visitor. His name was never mentioned before me, so that the only title by which I knew him was that of friend. The lively interest he testified in every thing relating to me, the regularity and frequency of his visits, and the parental tenderness with which he always addressed me, inspired me with an affection for him that was truly filial. His approach brought joy, and I never saw him depart without wishing his stay prolonged.

“ My governess and Donna Violante appeared to mark with satisfaction the pleasure his presence afforded me ; and availed themselves of my desire to please him, in order to urge forward my progress in every thing I learned, by acquainting him, whenever he came, of my advancement in the various accomplishments I pursued.

“ By geography I learned, that our little domain, consisting of a shrubbery, an orchard, kitchen-garden, and a small farm-yard, was but a small spot in one of the kingdoms of the earth; which, a knowledge of the planetary system, and a general idea of the constellations, taught me to consider as a speck in the immense creation of the splendid universe. Biography introduced mankind to my knowledge; the vices displayed on the stage of life made me rejoice at my distance from its busy scenes, since all the virtues of the human race, without any of its failings, seemed concentrated in the few amiable characters around me. Those individuals with whom I lived, and our agreeable visitor, were all the world to my heart, which desired nothing beyond the pure joys it experienced in this sequestered abode.

“ Thus passed my childhood in the hourly enjoyment of innocent pleasure, unmindful of the future, except occasionally to anticipate future felicities. But, with increasing age, my mind became inquisitive about my origin; and anxious to learn what claims I had to the attentions, indulgence, and affection of my protectress and her visitor, and by what ties I was bound to them,

I enquired of my governess respecting my parentage and connection with Donna Violante.

“ Senora Leonora told me, in answer to this demand, that although I did not know my parents, they were watchful over me ; that my welfare and happiness were their whole care ; and that, whenever it might be consistent with my safety, they would introduce themselves to my knowledge.

“ This reply stimulated, rather than repressed, my desire to be acquainted with the authors of my existence. An extreme sensibility of heart had given me the most lively notion of bonds of consanguinity, and high ideas relative to the mutual duties and sentiments resulting from the ties of parents and children : filial love and reverence were, in my opinion, the most interesting sensations by which the mind could be moved. There was a tenderness of affection in the conduct of my protectress and her visitor towards me, which appeared to me more like parental regard than the attachment my governess evinced for me ; and, notwithstanding my respect and fondness towards her was great, my heart felt a wide difference in the sensations it cherished for her and Donna Violante, whom my feelings considered entirely as a mother. My love, my confidence in her was

so great, and I experienced so ardent a desire to be confirmed in the idea of my filial affinity to her, that I resolved to hazard an enquiry on the subject; and seized an opportunity, one day when we were alone together, to ask why my mother forbore to make herself known to me, whose first wish was to pay the homage of daily duty to the author of my being. That maternal care,' added I, 'which has so attentively watched over my helpless infancy, and endeavoured to afford every happiness to my childhood, can never be repaid, except by the assurance, that my riper years shall be devoted to that filial allegiance, without the personal profession of which every felicity must be incomplete.'

"I plainly perceived Donna Violante was extremely touched by my speech, but that she endeavoured to hide her emotion; she appeared also evidently at a loss in what manner to answer my address; and, after some hesitation, said, 'Your mother, my dear Seraphina, is perfectly apprized of the amiableness of your nature, and the virtue of your character; which can leave her no doubt of your paying her every affectionate sentiment due for the assiduity of her care for your happiness and future advantage. Attention to that has hitherto prevented her introducing herself to you,

as the circumstances in which she is placed would render your acknowledgment of each other painful and hazardous to both, and equally distressing and dangerous to your father, by whom I have been desired to keep you ignorant of your name, and of every thing relating to your birth or relationship : on this subject, therefore, my dear girl, I must request your silence, and a perfect secrecy respecting the mystery of your situation. It was the wish of your parents that you should have remained unconscious of any extraordinary circumstances being attendant on your position in life : however, your conversation, my dear Seraphina, and the impossibility of my being capable of deceiving you by the fabrication of a false tale, has put you in possession of the truth so long concealed from you, that you have parents, who cannot acknowledge you under the heavy penalty of thereby forfeiting for you the rights to which you are, by birth, entitled.'

" This intelligence served doubly to perplex and excite my astonishment relative to my origin and situation ; but a powerful sentiment of obedience towards my unknown father, and respectful attachment for my protectress, who had commanded my silence on the subject of my birth and connections, deterred me from making any

farther attempts to satisfy my curiosity, even by the most remote questions, which might lead my conjectures to probable surmises.

“ Although this effort was extremely painful, from my eager impatience to know and be acknowledged by my parents, yet the idea of obeying and pleasing them by the suppression of my curiosity, consoled me, in some measure, for the irksome uncertainty of my situation. Donna Violante seemed gratified by my strict observance of her injunctions ; and told me one day, that my self-command, and obedience to the desire of my parents, might meet their reward in accelerating the period of their acknowledging me, as it was a test that my prudence might be trusted with the secret circumstances of my birth and connections.

“ About that time I attained my fifteenth year, and the thoughtlessness of childhood was succeeded by the sedateness of maturer age. Senora Leonora treated me more as a companion than a pupil ; and Donna Violante, kind and solicitous about me as ever, appeared to exchange the character of directress for that of friend.

“ The gentleman who had so regularly and frequently visited us, from the years of my first

recollection, on a sudden absented himself entirely from our habitation. The last time I saw him, previous to the cessation of his visits, an unusual dejection suppressed the agreeable cheerfulness which generally rendered him the most lively companion imaginable.

“ When he ceased to come, I lamented our no longer seeing him as usual, and was informed by Senora Leonora, that our old friend had been obliged to go a great distance on business, and that his absence might be long. I was so much grieved by this intelligence, that I felt not the least surprised at the melancholy his departure occasioned Donna Violante; but I was truly grieved to perceive her health decline with her spirits, and shortly became apprehensive that the loss of our friend’s society might have the most fatal consequences; for I observed an evident anxiety, and restless, uneasiness, undermining the constitution of my beloved protectress. Frequently as I sat in watchful observation of her countenance, I saw mental anguish lurk beneath a smile, assumed to tranquillize the solicitude my affection almost hourly expressed about her health.

“ A total loss of appetite, and a visible decay of strength, were the forerunners of an illness,

so serious as to confine her to bed. My affection for her rendered my situation heart-rending. The sick couch of my benefactress was my constant post of painful observation ; I watched over her with unremitted assiduity day and night, never leaving her, even for an instant, to repose myself. Want of rest, combined with the continual agitation of my mind, induced an alteration in my looks, which Donna Violante remarked with extreme uneasiness. To quiet her anxiety about me, I struggled against the indisposition, occasioned by lassitude, and in bearing up under the first attack of illness and debility, I increased both ; whilst the sight of her sufferings, and the idea of her danger, made me nearly distracted.

“ Medical assistance was procured for Donna Violante from a village some miles distant from our abode ; and the physician who attended, at the earnest solicitation of Senora Leonora and myself, informed us, that the situation of his patient was exceedingly perilous ; that he imagined her disorder originated from anxiety of mind, and that any agitation might be fatal to her.

“ To smother the sighs of my bursting heart ; to check the ever ready gushing tear, that, in suppression, choked my faltering voice ; to speak

composedly; when almost wild with grief, to appear unmoved whilst torn by keenest anguish, were my offices in a very reduced state both of body and mind: but the fortitude of religion supplied the deficiency of my strength. As I sat daily watching beside the emaciated Donna Violante, her every movement, and each pulsation, was noticed by my terror as a signal of her dissolution. If she looked pale, I feared she was just ready to expire from weakness; if a heightened glow flushed her cheeks, I regarded it, with dreadful apprehension, as a hectic blush denoting speedy mortality; if her hand felt warm, I dreaded an increase of fever, that might destroy her; if her touch was cold, it shocked me as the precursor of immediate death: each instant I suffered, by anticipation, the misery of losing what I regarded most on earth; for the strength of my attachment to her increased with my years, and in proportion to the benefits I hourly received from her; and I felt it would be impossible to love a mother with truer affection than I cherished for Donna Violante, who, from my infancy, had guarded and behaved to me with a parent's tenderness.

“ The incessant agitation of my mind at length so undermined my health that I was scarcely able to

support myself; and Donna Violante was too attentively observant of me to remain ignorant of my situation. Our respective illnesses and uneasinesses, by reciprocal action and re-action, became doubly dangerous to both. Unwilling to quit the apartment of my protectress, and finding her equally anxious to watch me as I had been solicitous to attend upon her, my bed was removed into the chamber of Donna Violante; and my good governess took care of us both.

Exertion, which was perhaps as efficacious towards the recovery of Donna Violante, who suffered from dejection, as it had been instrumental in occasioning my illness, restored her so much in a short time after my confinement, that she was enabled to leave her bed, from the desire of attending on me.

One evening, after I had been quiet for some time, and had closed my eyes to ease the intense pain in my head, that was nearly in a state of delirium from a raging fever, my protectress approached my pillow, and, kneeling down beside me, offered up, in a low voice, a fervent prayer to Heaven for my restoration. In this secret address to the throne of truth she called me—her child—her daughter!

“ She believed me asleep. I thought any deception a crime. I had never been guilty of the smallest deceit; and feeling that a sick bed should be clear of the slightest stain of conscience, even of evasion, which I should have felt myself culpable of in hiding the discovery I had made, the impulse of the moment prevailed, that told me it was better to act with sincerity in declaring what I had heard, than conceal the fact, and by that means behave with a species of duplicity: and thus decided, by a train of reflection, rapid as the lightning’s flash, which in an instantaneous gleam shows every thing around one’s glance, I opened my eyes; and clasping the uplifted hands of Donna Violante, which had been raised in supplication, ejaculated, ‘Am I indeed your child? and have I at length been blessed, by discovering, in the kind protector of my life, a long-sought mother!’

“ Surprise, and the peculiarly touching situation we were both in, struck Donna Violante with its fullest force, and, yielding to the powerful emotion of the moment, she clasped me to her bosom, exclaiming, ‘Yes, you are indeed my daughter!—and more, much more beloved than ever child has been before, although unowned by parents!’

“ I was in such an ecstasy, that I could utter nothing but an interjection of delight, and sinking into the arms of my mother, I burst into tears. Joy, however, or rather rapture, agitated my soul to such a degree of perturbation, that sobs and laughter, in alternate succession, alarmed my mother ; and seeing me in an apparent hysteric insensibility, lying as if lifeless on her breast, she cried, ‘ Oh, my unhappy child ! art thou ever to be the innocent victim of thy parent’s imprudence ? To it, alas ! thou owest an existence,—but deprived of thy rights, and marked by misfortune ! Heaven grant that my present imprudence may not occasion thy destruction !’

“ This supplicatory ejaculation, so full of mysterious meaning, roused me to fresh wonder ; and raising my head from my mother’s bosom, I observed her almost convulsed with internal struggles, whilst her large dark eyes, lifted towards Heaven, beamed the expression of mental agony. As I gazed upon her charming countenance, more interesting than I had ever seen it, my soul seemed to propel me, by an irresistible impulse, to offer my filial reverence on my knees, and in that attitude of humble allegiance, solicit the long wished for blessing of my mother. My strength, however, failed me for this purpose, and I had only

sufficient power to throw myself once more upon the maternal bosom, which I inundated with a flood of tears.

“ Whilst I lay upon my new-found parent’s breast, she pressed me tenderly to her heart ; the tremulous beating of which, marking extreme agitation, made every nerve in my frame agonizingly pulsate in accord. I grasped my mother’s cold and trembling hand, and carrying it to my lips, I imprinted on it a kiss of filial reverence and love, saying, ‘ Most honoured and idolized of parents, in obedience to your command I ask not the history of my birth, nor can I desire, if unpleasing to you, the least elucidation of the mysterious manner in which I have hitherto lived ; but, in pity to my anxiety, tell me whom I am to associate with you as an equal object of my filial duty and affection. I understand Heaven has still blessed me with a father’s care, that, in concert with your’s, has watched over my happiness and welfare ; and am I never to learn whom, with yourself, I am to love and reverence with a daughter’s tender attachment ?’

“ Seek not, my child,’ replied my mother, ‘ to know your father ; by his express desire I am prohibited from informing you who he is :

should circumstances ever admit of your seeing him, and learning your origin, you will know the reasons for my distressing secrecy. In discovering myself to be your mother, I have revealed more than I ought; but since my inadvertence has acquainted you, my dear Seraphina, with your affinity to me, it becomes necessary I should apprise you, that Senora Leonora is the only person, besides myself and your father, who knows the mystery of your situation; and that my honour, your father's advantage, and your welfare, would be the forfeits of a declaration, that you were related to me by filial ties: it is necessary, for my reputation, that I should not appear as your mother, since the nature of my connection with your father cannot be declared.'

" I took the hand of my mother, kissed it with affection, and, placing it at my heart, I lay down upon my bed; while a confusion of ideas, in quick succession, passed over my perturbed imagination, as dark flying clouds, in ever varying forms, obscure the sky.

" My mother continued to kneel beside me, and fearing me exhausted by my recent emotions, she hung over me with the tenderest solicitude depicted in her countenance and attitude. She

gently administered refreshing restoratives, rubbed and pressed my hands with fervour, bathed my temples with perfume, and kissed my cheek, as I lay motionless. Her assiduities, and the tears of maternal affection which fell on my face, deeply affected me, and yet composed my agitated thoughts. As I heard her tears dropping, in quick succession, on my pillow, I mingled my sorrows with her's, feeling it a supreme felicity to weep with a parent. For some moments my grief was unnoticed, but at length, half suffocated with emotion, I sobbed aloud; when, a deep-drawn sigh heaving the bosom of my mother, she thus addressed me:—‘ My Seraphina, your grief distracts me, knowing myself its unfortunate cause. Alas! my child, through my imprudence, you are the heir of misfortune; instead of owing to your mother rank and fortune, you lose, by the error of her youth, an elevated station in society: nurtured in the vale of obscurity, your future portion may be misery. I feel I merit your reproaches rather than your love. Perhaps the fear of forfeiting your affection, your esteem, your respect, would have been a sufficient motive for my keeping you ignorant of your affinity to me, had not reasons, if possible, even stronger than the dread of losing your good opinion, obliged me to conceal carefully from your knowledge that

you were my child. Painful, indeed, has been the deception, although negative, which I have been compelled to employ to hide my relationship from you: to spare you, however, my beloved Seraphina, the tacit deceit circumstances of an imperious nature forced me to adopt, was one cause of my concealing your situation from you ; and to save you still the pain which attends your lot, was my earnest wish.

“ Your birth, my child, has been at once my greatest joy and sorrow. Your existence, although it may prove to you a misfortune, is, however, my consolation. Dear, but unhappy Seraphina ! thy mother entreats thee, by thy filial tie, to pity, rather than blame her, for entailing on thee nothing but misery, instead of the splendour of an exalted station !”

“ My mother concluded her affecting address and adjuration with a convulsive burst of anguish, that penetrated to my soul, and awakened its strongest feelings ; when, seizing the hands of my weeping parent, I exclaimed, ‘ Whatever misfortunes may have attended my birth, or whatever miseries may accompany me through life, I must ever think myself greatly indebted to you for existence, the best gift of Heaven’s bounty, if pro-

perly employed. In consoling a suffering mother, happiness must crown my days.'

"Dearest Seraphina!" cried my mother, 'you are indeed my comfort! but if you would not deprive me of it, you must moderate your feelings; and as a means of doing so, refrain from any further enquiries on the subject of your late discovery, until I license your investigating it. Some time or other circumstances may admit of my confessing to you the events of my life; in which, perhaps, you may be so indulgent as to think me more unfortunâte than criminal: at present, however, you must spare me the painful recital, since I am not at liberty to relate it.'

"Never will I voluntarily cause you any suffering, my beloved mother,' ejaculated I; 'and from my entire silence henceforth, even in our closest privacy, on the subject of my affinity to you, unless I gain your permission to mention it, learn how implicitly I subscribe to your power over me, and my readiness to pay the filial duty of perfect obedience to your wishes, however difficult compliance with them may be.'

"My mother acknowledged, by a tearful smile of pleasure, that my dutiful homage soothed her

afflicted heart. In the ardour of grateful affection, I imprinted a salute of filial allegiance on her hands, which I still held within my gentle grasp; and my heart vibrated with delight to the soft pressure of my mother's lips to my forehead, when the entrance of our attendant put an end to our interesting interchange of caresses.

“Judicious remedies, excellent nursing, the charms of a mother's society, and an earnest attention, on my part, to take care of myself, for the consolation of a fond and unhappy parent, restored me, in a short time to my usual health.

“My existence acquired infinite value in my estimation, on the reflection, that in my life was comprised the chief source of my mother's enjoyment. My pursuit of knowledge and accomplishments also became more eager, from the idea, that in my protectress a parent was solicitous for my improvement.

“Anxious to please her, and to obey her in every particular, by strenuous endeavours, I gained such a power over my mind, that my thoughts seldom strayed in vague conjectures concerning my situation. The delight of knowing my mother, of living with her, and administering to her com-

fort, conferred on me a happiness that seemed sufficient without any other pleasures. My studies, my music, my drawing, our rural employments, and the conversation of my mother and Senora Leonora, appeared to concenter all the joys which the world was capable of affording me. In the evident increase of my enjoyment, my parent's unhappiness diminished; her brow was seldom overcast with sorrow, and in a placid course of several months, our days passed tranquilly.

“ At length our visitor appeared, after an absence of more than a year. His arrival surprised me one morning whilst I was sitting beside my mother; and the pleasure I experienced in seeing our old acquaintance return, was heightened by the delight she expressed at this event.

“ By the turn of conversation, I perceived our friend had been informed of all that had occurred to us since our departure; and I felt no surprise on the discovery, that a constant correspondence had been maintained between our family and an intimate, whom, from my infancy, I remembered as a confidential associate.

“ I have already mentioned my having been

educated as a foreigner in my native land ; and I experienced much satisfaction in the idea, that in the country where circumstances had compelled us to live as entire strangers, we had been fortunate enough to attach to our interest one sincere and affectionate friend ; for such our visitor's invariable conduct proved him to be. The kind solicitude he expressed about us was so much the more flattering, in my opinion, as his regard for us, totally unconnected, as I imagined we must be, could proceed from no motive but the most perfect esteem, and the purest friendship. This notion of his disinterested attachment to us, as a corroborative proof of the exalted merit of his character, rendered him dear to me, in proportion as I loved my mother with enthusiasm ; and, in fact, the affection I felt for our old friend was almost a filial regard.

“ Shortly after his return, in the course of his frequent visits, he mentioned before me often, that it was a pity, at my age, to live in the seclusion I had hitherto done ; and that I must, at his entreaty, consent to leave my protectress, in order to mix a little in the world, in which I was calculated to shine as an ornament to society.

“ I acknowledged the compliment of this

speech with a smiling bow; and, thanking him with sincere gratitude for the interest he took in my concerns, I assured him, I had no wish to change my present charming retirement for the pleasures of the world; and that although I acknowledged his influence over me, it should never induce me to leave, even for a short absence, the protectress of my infancy, and the guardian of my youth.

“ I admire you greatly, my young friend Seraphina,” said our friend, “ for your attachment to Donna Violante : I am aware of your desire to gratify her wishes in every particular ; and I therefore entertain hopes, that although my entreaties may fail to move your resolves, yet that her influence over your affection will be effectual to persuade you to a temporary absence from her for your own advantage ; in which I am little less interested than your protectress : nor will you be surprised at this when you recollect, that although she has been the guardian of your childhood, I have that affectionate interest in your welfare, which my acquaintance with you, from your infancy, and my knowledge of your merits, cannot fail to create in the bosom of a true and faithful friend. As such I may have a claim to your

confidence and regard; and I flatter myself, my dear Seraphina, that, in consideration of my representation, you will permit me to conduct you to a respectable lady of my intimate acquaintance, who is in anxious expectation of a visit from you, and with whom you will find yourself, if not as happy as with your friend Donna Violante, yet under equally careful protection.

“ My mother, who, by her looks, seemed much gratified by our friend's proposal, now united her entreaties with his, that I would accept the obliging invitation, made through him, by one of his most intimate acquaintance, for my temporary abode with her.

“ I will answer for your meeting with every kind attention,’ added my mother, addressing herself to me, ‘ for although the lady is not personally known to me, I have long been introduced to the just appreciation of her uncommon virtues; and should have wished to rank her amongst my intimates, had not the very retired manner in which I have been obliged to live ever since my arrival in this country, put an insurmountable obstacle to my appearing in the world, or even receiving company at home. However, although I have never had the honour of being in

the lady's society, her friendship for our kind visitor will ensure you a pleasant reception, my dear Seraphina; therefore, let me prevail upon you to consent to accompany him next week to the lady's house. She is prepared to receive you; and your merits, on acquaintance, will ensure the affection of an amiable woman.—She is apprized of my situation,' continued my mother, smiling, and directing her looks towards our friend; 'and knowing that I live entirely like a recluse, she may be perhaps surprised, that the pupil of a hermit should have acquired the grace of a court in the seclusion of a wilderness.'

"Not at all," interrupted the gentleman, with eagerness; 'my friend, who is one of the most amiable and virtuous women that adorn the highest circles of this country, has, by me, been taught to regard Donna Violante as the paragon of her sex; and will therefore expect to behold, in her favourite and *élève*, a model of female loveliness and perfection.'

"As our friend spoke, he appeared animated by an extraordinary energy; and I observed a blush of confusion colour the cheeks of my mother at this unusual effusion of gallantry, which an interchange of glances between her and

her visitor seemed to indicate a check on the part of Donna Violante, and a humble confession on his side, of having committed an indiscretion. My remark on this subject tended to confirm me in the opinion I had ever entertained of my mother's delicacy, which every part of her conduct, and each sentiment of her soul, had ever impressed upon my mind.

“ Our visitor, as usual, took his departure before our hour of dinner ; and my mother spent the evening in endeavouring to obviate every objection I made to leaving her, and entering the busy scenes of life. It was in vain that I assured her my whole desires centered in the performance of my filial duties, that all my happiness consisted in the charms of her society, and that the greatest pleasures of the world could never compensate to me for the privation of her presence, and the tranquil enjoyments of the retirement in which I had passed my days.

“ My governess had withdrawn on the departure of our visitor ; and finding myself alone with my mother, and being extremely agitated by the interesting subject of our conversation, a powerful impulse, which I found irresistible, impelled me to throw myself on my mother's neck, while I

adjured her, by the strong tie that bound us to each other, not to insist on my departure from the home where her tender care had nurtured my childhood.

“ My attachment to my parent, and the lively manner in which it was evinced, affected her to tears ; and for some moments, locked in each other’s embrace, we wept together. During those moments of acute feeling, I entertained a hope that my mother’s indulgence would yield to my caresses the favour so ardently solicited, and that she would accede to my remaining with her. This idea consoled and tranquillized me, till my parent, regaining her accustomed composure, requested me to attend calmly to the reasons she had for urging my leaving the retired situation in which I had ever lived.—‘ Although the most proper for your education, my dear Seraphina,’ added my mother, ‘ it would now be prejudicial to your interest to remain any longer in the entire seclusion to which my fate condemns me : circumstances, which I must not explain, render it impossible for me to appear in the world as I once had a right to expect ; but it is necessary that you, my beloved child, should assume that place in society from which my position excludes me, and that the indiscretion of my youth should not

rob you of those pleasures fitted for your age. You have now, my sweet girl, attained that period of life when its enjoyments are best relished; and I should ill fulfil maternal duty were I to sacrifice your advantage to my own private happiness—that must not be—no, my Seraphina! although culpable of having exposed you to the probability of misfortunes, and, notwithstanding I am guilty of having been the unhappy occasion of your suffering many privations, I am solicitous to repair, as much as possible, the wrongs my conduct has caused; and I am anxious to place you in a sphere worthy of you, where your virtues may be rewarded. Should it please Heaven to prolong your life, in the course of nature, I must leave you in a world of care and sorrow, perhaps unprovided with any of those comforts which attend on easy circumstances; destitute of fortune, as of a respectable station in society, I should have the misery of bequeathing you, on my wretched death-bed, nothing but a poor blessing; whilst you, the hapless inheritor of my misfortunes, might be reduced to the extremest despondence and distress.

“From this view of probable horror I would turn to the cheerful prospect of your eligible establishment in the world. Your appearance

in its social scenes will ensure you every thing that loveliness and exalted virtue may claim as a tribute from mankind. By remaining with me, you forego every pretension to an advantageous situation in life ; and will thus, not only doom yourself to an unhappy fate, but likewise sentence me to misery, from the consciousness of having entailed misfortunes on your innocence by my error. Let me entreat you, therefore, my beloved Seraphina, to consider deliberately the situation in which you stand, and to determine coolly for your own welfare and my tranquillity ; and let me adjure you, my child, by the tie of near relationship which unites us so strongly to each other, to perform the filial duty of obedience you have so solemnly bound yourself to perform on a bed of sickness, at the touching moment when you first discovered me to be your mother ; by that sacred title, my Seraphina, I claim from you the allegiance of a daughter !

“ Although my mother’s address was couched in rather mysterious terms, yet it made the deepest impression on my mind ; it excited at once my curiosity to comprehend its full import, and a kind of dread, which invariably accompanies the expectation of undefined and, consequently, un-

limited terror. The impressive manner in which my mother spoke, contributed to heighten the interest of her address, and increase the strength of my feelings. The confusion of my ideas on the subject of my apparently extraordinary situation, and the agitation of my beating heart, kept me silent.

“ My mother, perceiving me hesitating in a reply, and evidently much affected by what she had said, kindly took my hand, assuring me, with the most endearing accents, that I should not be urged to a precipitate determination on a matter in which my fate in life might be decided as fortunate or otherwise, and in which her happiness, even more than mine, was concerned.

“ Rejoiced at this respite in my resolve, I kissed my mother's hand in token of gratitude for the delay allowed me in my determination, feeling that my duty must command the sacrifice of my wishes to my parent's desires.

“ I spent the evening in reflecting on what my mother had desired me to consider. The more I thought on my situation the more extraordinary it appeared ; and all I could collect from my mo-

ther's ambiguous speech, relative to her position and mine, tended to perplex rather than unravel the mystery in which we were each enveloped.

“ After our supper we retired, as usual, at an early hour, to our chambers ; and, on saluting my parent, as I had been accustomed, on our separation for the night, she pressed my hand with particular tenderness, requesting me to remember, that her happiness, more than my own, depended on my assent to leaving her ; adding, that as she had been compelled, by unfortunate circumstances, to give up the world, she should be miserable if, sacrificing myself to her, I should be excluded from society ; and that she should not feel easy until she knew I had consented to enter into company and partake of the pleasures of life, which I could not do by remaining with her.

“ The earnestness of her manner affected me extremely : a powerful impulse prompted me to solicit the elucidation of my situation, and the reasons which obliged her to live in total seclusion, from a world where she was calculated to shine with uncommon lustre ; and I was almost tempted to make her gratifying me in those demands a condition of my compliance with her earnest request to my leaving her, when a more generous

sentiment suggested to me, that it would be base, and highly culpable, thus to take advantage of circumstances to draw forth from her strongest feelings an avowal they could not, in such a conjuncture, refuse, although it had hitherto been withheld. This variance between my ardent desires and better purposes, and between my most eager curiosity and sense of honour, terminated in the preponderance of the latter, on the recollection, that my word had been pledged to abstain from the remotest enquiry relative to my situation, until licensed by my mother to investigate it ; which would, as yet, be evidently disagreeable to her, as the tenor of her conversation had, in no way, authorised me to think myself at liberty to make any enquiries respecting my birth, or her position. Sensible, therefore, that it would be an imprudence, as well as a breach of duty, to demand a fuller explanation of circumstances than had been offered me, I resolved to retire as quickly as possible, fearful of allowing myself an opportunity of deviating from the determination I had just had strength to make, but which a tempting occasion might induce my weakness to infringe ; for, inexperienced as I was, I was aware that the human heart may be induced to error from the facility of doing wrong ; and perfectly sensible that a conversation in private with

my mother, on the interesting subject of my leaving her, by exciting powerful feelings, might easily lead to a subject she wished to avoid explaining, I resolved to quit her chamber that night, without allowing myself to enter on a subject I felt might be too affecting to leave me the proper command over my sensibility ; and, kissing her hand in silence, I withdrew to my own apartment.

“ On retiring thither, I threw open my casement in order to breathe the refreshing air, and by calm meditation, regulate my feelings and conduct. The cooling zephyrs of a serene spring evening, and the tranquillity of the surrounding scene, embowered within the closest sylvan retreat, composed my agitated spirits ; and when they were sufficiently settled to admit of my performing my orisons, I threw myself on my knees at the footstool of Divine Providence, to supplicate the guidance of Heaven in the resolves and actions of my life.

“ The sanctity of prayer rendered my mind perfectly placid, and the solitude of my situation, united with the quiet hours of night, enabled me to reason so peaceably and properly, that I perceived plainly all my doubts concentrated in the act of

submission to my mother's wishes, since religion inculcates nothing more strongly, than to honour our parents ; and I felt that we must grossly deceive ourselves in imagining moral and religious duties independent of each other, or that the infringement of one obligation can be repaired by our observance of all others ; for entire obedience can alone be acceptable to the Divine Essence. Perfectly sensible of this, I regretted my having dared to make a single objection in opposition to my mother's proposal, and resolving immediately to repair my error, I determined on going instantly to her chamber to acquaint her with my sincere repentance, and my readiness to follow implicitly every wish she would henceforth make known to me, since I felt myself bound to consider her desires as commands. Although I had quitted her apartment a good while, and thought it probable she might be in bed, yet I believed her mind too much affected to permit sleep thus early to have visited her ; and I imagined it might be as conducive to her tranquil repose, as it was to my own peace, to assure her of my entire submission to her will,

“ Thus persuaded, I repaired to her room ; and, on approaching it, was extremely surprised to hear voices in conversation. The first idea that

alarmed my fears respecting my mother was the apprehension that sudden illness had summoned either Senora Leonora, or an attendant, to her chamber ; and a check of conscience accompanied this suggestion, thinking it probable the uneasiness of my beloved parent's mind, on my account, might be the cause of a malady which her maternal tenderness was anxious to conceal from me at that hour of repose.

“ Whilst this train of thought passed through my agitated fancy, I gained the chamber-door, which, in trepidation, I attempted to open : it was barred, however, against my entrance ; and as I stood in painful suspense, my alarm about my mother was converted into terror on hearing the voice of a man parlying with her. Equally astonished, frightened, and irresolute how to act, under the dreadful apprehension that robbers and assassins, taking advantage of our lonely situation, and the dead of night, had broken into our dwelling to commit their deeds of darkness, and that my helpless mother would be the first victim of their sanguinary ferocity,—horror-struck at the direful scene my imagination represented to me, I felt transfixed to the spot ; and whilst I stood, as if petrified and motionless, at the door of my mother's chamber, I distinctly heard her say,

‘ Although Seraphina has unfortunately learned that she is my daughter, I am convinced she is not at all suspicious of my connection with you; and believing herself a foreigner in this country, I trust nothing can lead to discover what it is requisite to conceal from her pure innocence and perfect candour, and from the world.’

“ I hope,” replied a masculine voice, in an audible whisper, which clearly reached my ear, ‘ that our connection may continue a profound secret : should it transpire, my dearest Violante, you will have to reproach me with being the unhappy cause, not only of your secluded life, and the misery of a precarious subsistence hitherto, but also of being left, perhaps, forlorn and destitute of every thing.’

“ A pause now ensued, during which I heard my mother, in a low voice, endeavouring to sooth the sorrow of her companion, very clearly denoted by the mournful cadence in which he spoke. At length I heard him exclaim, in an impassioned tone, ‘ Oh ! my Violante, my love ! distraction accompanies the thought, that I have seduced you to wretchedness—and destruction !’

“ From the sound of the voice I now disco-

vered my parent's midnight companion to be our old acquaintance and frequent morning visitor. Thunder-struck equally with amazement and an indefinable horror, I felt like a miserable wanderer on a desert wild, where a tremendous storm seemed to render desolation more dreadful; and where, benighted amidst nature's strongest convulsion of warring elements, I, a forlorn, terrified, and isolated being, struck by the lightning's flash, that glared a livid gleam around upon the blasted waste, saw nought but spectres of departed peace and former happiness to drive me into melancholy lunacy. The idea of my mother *seduced* to wretchedness and destruction drove me to distracting desperation. I had unintentionally listened, and had heard too much; and in a state little short of desperation, I started from the door, hurrying to my own apartment; where I threw my trembling frame into a chair placed near the casement I had left unclosed.

“The air that played amidst the rustling foliage, and fanned me with the wing of spring-time's coolest zephyr, revived me from a situation of almost total insensibility, into which I had fallen on reaching my room.

“It was now past midnight; and at this hour

of silence and solitude I pondered on my situation, already too much revealed, although the sum of all I knew about myself was little. Who I was I knew not; but that was indifferent to me, since I had learned my mother had been *seduced* to wretchedness and to destruction! and that living as aliens in the only country I knew, the only person of that nation with whom we had any acquaintance, intercourse, or, perhaps, any connection, instead of being the true and faithful friend I had from my infancy been taught to consider him, was the seducer of my mother, the secretly admitted companion of her midnight hours! Horror accompanied the thought; and I shuddered to reflect, that I had probably been maintained from my infancy by the sacrifice of my mother's honour. 'Gracious Heaven!' I exclaimed, mentally, 'can she, whom I have ever believed purity personified, consent to live in infamy? Can she, who taught me every refinement of sentiment, and endeavoured to impress me with a wish to act, in every respect, with the utmost delicacy, have the grossness of mind to deviate from that innocence of which she knows so well the value? Can a parent instruct her child to venerate virtue, and practise piety, whilst she, in her own mind and person swerves from rectitude, and infringes religious principles?'

“ Whilst my reason made these internal interrogations, my filial love refused, or rather denied, the charges of accusation urged by my senses, and told me I must be mistaken in what I had imagined against my mother’s virtue. What I had heard appeared like an illusion of the fancy, a dream. ‘ Ah ! no,’ ejaculated truth, whose gentlest whisper no self-deception can silence : fancy may mislead the heart, but the light of reason must always beam conviction on the understanding. I recollected that my mother had avowed her imprudence, had forfeited for me rank and fortune in society, which she had been confessedly compelled to relinquish. Why then had she resigned an elevated situation in life ? how had she lost her claim to riches ? and wherefore was she obliged to fly from the world into that seclusion which she considered detrimental to me ? and for what cause, if the retirement in which we lived was become unfit for my age, could not my mother admit company at home ?

“ To all these demands the reply seemed but too plain in what I had inadvertently heard.—My mother, alas ! had been seduced to resign a splendid station in society, and to forego every thing, even honour and virtue, to live devoted to her seducer !

“ Did he not visit her secretly at the dead hour of night? was he not now enclosed in privacy within her chamber? and had I not heard from his lips a confession that he had seduced her to wretchedness and destruction? This, indeed, seemed to me an avowal, that must be admitted as the clearest evidence of the guilt of my parent and her companion; whose illegitimate connection could not be doubted, since nothing, in my opinion, but the shame and scandal attending it, need have prevented its declaration. The fear of its transpiring, which our visitor had expressed, added to the compunction he seemed to feel for being the cause of her seclusion, and of having not only been the occasion of her present precarious subsistence, but of her forlorn and destitute situation in future, proved but too plainly to my conviction, that my unhappy mother had no legal claims either on her lover, on society, or even on the virtuous, whom humanity prompts to relieve indigent goodness. Every misery that can befall a human creature seemed as if gathered round me in the form of ferocious monsters, and, like beasts of prey, to surround me and my parent as their devoted victims. I shuddered with wild affright at the picture of distress my imagination presented, which, for some moments, almost deranged my faculties. Fearful of losing my reason

in the violent tumult of my mind, I endeavoured to restrain my feelings, in order to regain that composure requisite for my direction in the painfully difficult conjuncture in which I found myself placed.

“ An earnest desire of accomplishing a fixed purpose will, perhaps, invariably facilitate the execution of any possible design; and my wish and attempt to calm my mind, and retain the government and use of my reason, submitted my sensibility so greatly to my understanding, that it obtained its best powers of reflection, of election, and of determination.

“ The recollection of every thing my mother had communicated to me on the subject of my birth and situation, served to corroborate the suspicions I entertained against my parent’s honour and virtue; and all circumstances tended to confirm me in the idea most painful to every principle of delicacy and religion. Dreadful, indeed, beyond description, were the sensations I endured!

“ My home, but lately so endeared to my heart, seemed now a den of horror, where crimes of the most shameful kind polluted its inhabit-

ants. Imagination presented my mother as a fugitive, who had deserted my father, perhaps, to live abandoned to her seducer. My parent, who, although disowning me as her child, I had loved with the most tender filial affection, appeared divested of all those charming qualities which had hitherto irradiated her to my view as a celestial being. Yet, although she had lost, in my opinion, the chief ornament of her sex, purity and virtue, I still felt she was my mother; that as such I must be attached to her till my latest hour, since she was the author of my life, and had been the protector of my helpless state; added to which, I felt an increased obligation to her for having educated me with care. Innumerable tender recollections of my childhood pressed upon my heart its weight of filial gratitude, and a powerful impulse, as if of divine inspiration, suggested to me, as an indispensable duty of a child, to exert every power to save that being from whom existence had been derived. In quick succession to this thought, the means of effecting it occurred; and in haste I sat down to write the following letter.

“ AT a loss by what title to address you, since interdicted that most endearing of all epithets, the name denoting our close connection, I must,

however, adjure you by the tie which mutually binds us in an indissoluble union of interests, to attend calmly to a subject equally important to us both.

“Sensible that the task I am about to undertake must occasion us each innumerable painful feelings, I adopt this method of addressing your’s, as the best to spare them and my own; for I would be equally careful not to wound your sensibility unnecessarily as to avoid confusion myself; and, therefore, for both our sakes, I shall endeavour to be as delicate and as brief as the nature of my theme admits.

“It is needless to mention the subject of your late desires respecting me; it will be sufficient to acquaint you, that my earnest wish of complying with your’s induced me to visit your chamber last night, after I had retired to my room, in order that I might not defer a moment to inform you I was ready to comply with your requests, which I should ever obey as commands, even when most in opposition to my tenderest inclinations. Impelled by filial affection and duty, I hastened to your apartment, and hearing some person in conference with you, I was at first apprehensive that some sudden indisposition had summoned an

attendant to your assistance, until, on a nearer approach, my alarm increased at the sound of a man's voice. It instantly occurred to me that a daring ruffian had broke into your chamber to commit some deed of violence at the dead of night ; and, although nearly motionless with terror, I essayed to open the door, intending to rush forward to your aid, when I found myself debarred entrance ; and whilst vainly endeavouring to force my passage into your room, I heard a voice pronounce that you had been seduced to wretchedness and to destruction.

“ Judge of my surprise and horror, on recognizing, in the accents of the person who spoke, our only visitor as the clandestinely admitted companion of your midnight hours !

“ It would be unbecoming in me to take the liberty of commenting on your conduct ; neither would it be consistent with my promise, nor conformable with the laws of obedience, which duty and sentiment qually bind me to observe towards you, to demand any elucidation on the subject of my birth or situation. By your voluntary confession, I have been informed that your imprudence has forfeited rank, fortune, and a splendid situation in society, to live in this country

as an alien, on a precarious provision, excluded from the world, and with the melancholy prospect of future distress. I assume not the licence to ask your reasons for the election you have made; on the contrary, I disclaim any right to hint at a reproach for your having betrayed your own interest and my peace; for I owe you more, much more, than my filial gratitude can ever repay.—To you I am indebted, not only for an introduction into life; but also for your tender watchfulness over my helpless state of infancy, for the culture of my mind, and your desire for my temporal advantage and eternal happiness. To you then I must ever acknowledge infinite obligations for many years of pleasure, for every endowment I possess, and the means of everlasting felicity. Miserably ungrateful should I then be were I to be unthankful for such inestimable benefits. You have instructed me too well in my duties to render it possible for me to swerve greatly from moral and religious principles. You cannot, therefore, blame me if, in observance of them, I obey the dictates of my conscience in addressing your's!

“ That exquisitely refined sensibility, that pure delicacy, that strong sense of honour, that

rigid integrity, and that exalted piety, you have incessantly endeavoured to instil into my heart, will point my meaning to your's when I inform you, that no present ease, affluence, enjoyment, nor even the greatest exaltation and splendour, purchased at the expence of virtue, could, in my eyes or estimation, compensate for the least deviation from it's strictest maxims. Permit me, then, to assure you, that I would with you suffer every privation, brave every risk of difficulty, every necessity of incessant toil, to labour out our honest subsistence; nay, I would fly into the chill gripe of hopeless penury, seated on the very brink of a loathsome grave, and sink unpitied into it, locked in the arms of agonizing poverty, rather than live the companion of one who sacrificed honour to obtain the most delightful residence in the charming bower of a Rosamond, even were it adorned by all the pomp of royalty, and would ever be maintained by the munificence of a king, subject to no human law but his despotic will.

“ From this fascinating retreat let my innocence urge your immediate flight. I will work—I will become a mendicant, should industry fail to procure you an honourable support. Thus a

daughter earnestly and humbly solicits; but virtue imperiously commands a compliance with this filial request.

“ My purpose of leaving you is altered, because that duty and affection which lately prompted me to compliance with your desires for my quitting you, enjoin me now, by my filial allegiance, not to let you remain in this abode, shackled in ignominious chains. Strong as are the bonds of our union, they shall never make me submit to wear fetters of infamy, however richly gilded by dishonourable generosity. Circumstanced, therefore, as I unfortunately am, it will be equally disgraceful to me, and wounding to my feelings, for me ever, in future, to admit an interview with, or submit to receive a favour, or the least compliment, from the person who, appearing under the mask of friendship to me, has been the seducer of my parent. Consequently, I must decline his introduction into the world, even were it to gain me the most splendid station in society.

“ I will not ask you to pardon this language, since it is dictated by all those feelings I imbibed from your instructions. In my words the genius of your virtue warns you no longer to desert it !

“ Having sealed and addressed my letter to Donna Violante, I threw myself upon my bed, not to sleep, but consider the best mode of conveying my address to my mother, and of conducting myself towards her when we next met. I reflected, that to send the letter by any of our attendants might seem strange to them, and by exciting their curiosity, lead them to suspicions and investigations which prudence and honour equally should endeavour to guard against. I, therefore, felt reduced to the awkward task of presenting it myself, and experienced extreme pain in the anticipation of an office that would probably expose me to much confusion, when I recollected my mother having informed me Senora Leonora was acquainted with the circumstances of my birth; concluding she must consequently be apprised of every thing relative to our situation, I determined to make her the bearer of my letter, resolving not to lose an instant in performing a duty absolutely prescribed to me by every principle of sentiment and religion.

“ The rectitude of my intentions lulled me to tranquillity, and the peaceful hours composed my agitated spirits so much that I dropped into a slumber before the dawn appeared; but sleep resigning the command of my mind to fancy's

empire, imagination usurped the sceptre, and, dethroning reason, reigned with lawless power, while my restless thoughts, in wild confusion, raged in all the horror of a dreadful anarchy. Perturbed beyond description, I started into wakefulness as aurora's earliest light foretold the approach of morning.

“ Habit, originating in principle, and confirmed by it, always called me from my bed at whatever hour the sun arose. I had been accustomed to bound from my couch with the elastic spring of spirits nerved by happiness; but with peace my cheerfulness had taken flight, and left me a prey to dejection. Sad, but not indolent, since I was sensible that activity is essential in every situation, I rose with the day. The bright sun-beams of the vernal season rendered nature brilliant; but a gloom hung over my ideas. The flowers of spring disclosed their beauties and fragrance to the morn; but its breath no longer, as usual, delighted my senses, for my fancy seemed sickening even to death. The birds in sweetest carols saluted the rosy hours; but the melody of the feathered choristers, instead of exhilarating my heart as formerly, sunk it almost to melancholy at the reflection, that every thing around me had

been from my childhood purchased at the high price of my mother's deviation from those delicate and virtuous principles which are the chief ornaments of a female character. Nothing but experience can give any idea of the dreadful sensation accompanying the condemnation of a parent, where the powerful feelings of nature are wounded continually by our judgment. Such was my horrid situation.

“ Meanwhile, as the day advanced, I prepared myself for its trials by addressing the most fervent supplications to the throne of Heaven, for grace to perceive and fulfil the arduous duties of my difficult situation.

“ Composed by the devotional exercises of the morning, I descended at an early hour into the garden, which, blooming with all the flowers of spring, offered me the richest carpet of verdure, enamelled with innumerable brilliant hues, while the umbrageous alleys surrounding our dwelling led me under a canopy of blossoms, that shed upon the zephyr's wing a perfume of the sweetest combination. But these scenes, in which I had so often and so recently delighted, instead of charming, now disgusted me; and

when summoned to our morning repast, I loathed to enter an abode I believed to be that of infamy and disgrace.

“ My heart, instead of bounding forward before my eager steps to meet the maternal salutation, palpitated at the approach of my mother, whom I greeted with a mixed and most painful sensation, whilst my knees, trembling with extreme agitation, nearly refused to support my chilled and drooping frame. Really ill with agitation, my pallid countenance alarmed my parent and Senora Leonora.

“ The latter accosting me with kindness, enquired the cause of my apparent indisposition; and my mother, seizing my icy and tremulous hand, pressed me with unusually tender emotion to her breast, soliciting to know if any thing had particularly affected me, and urged me to repose all my uneasiness in her bosom.

“ Encircled in a parent's arms, and listening to her solicitude, so affectionately expressed for my consolation, I almost lost the remembrance of her deviations in her maternal tenderness; and, returning her caresses, promised the confi-

dential confession of sorrows, which, I added, were in her power to remove.

“ Imagining I alluded to the subject that had agitated me on the preceding evening, my mother redoubled the testimonies of the affection she felt due to the demonstration of mine; and our breakfast began and concluded without any occurrence, except the frequent repetition of mutual kindnesses.

“ It was our usual custom to repair in fine weather to a small summer-house, embowered amidst the shades of our garden; in whose cool and rural retreat we spent the morning hours in various employments: enjoying each other's society, in the pursuit of useful and ornamental works, the labours of our needle were rendered delightful by one of our society reading aloud some serious or amusive author.

“ Senora Leonora, according to custom, left us after breakfast to superintend domestic concerns; and as my mother led the way into the garden, I seized the occasion of our privacy, and, drawing my letter from my bosom just as we entered the summer-house together, I dropped

on one knee at my parent's feet, and, kissing the hand she extended to take the letter I offered, I presented it with a gesture of respectful attachment; then springing up, I retired with trepidation from the presence of a mother whom I revered in her maternal character, whilst I involuntarily dared to condemn her conduct; feeling at the same time, that, whatever misery it might entail on me, I could never cease to love her if she should amend the errors of which her own avowal, corroborated by my own discovery, had convicted her.

“Retiring to my own chamber, I spent some time in the extremest anxiety; and in about an hour Senora Leonora entered with a letter, which she delivered in silence, and leaving me alone I perused the following words:—

“Your address, my Seraphina, has at once rejoiced and grieved me. The proof you have given me of your delicacy and rectitude delights my heart; but to feel myself, in some measure, deserving of your reproaches, mortifies me, even while I experience pride in calling you my child and pupil.

“Sensible that my conduct requires justifica-

tion, I cannot see you until I obtain permission to endeavour to exculpate myself in your opinion. The agitation occasioned by an unhappy situation confines me to my apartment, where I shall not summon you without a hope of clearing myself sufficiently to retain your affection, and prove myself deserving of your pity, if unworthy your filial respect. I feel, alas! from fatal experience, that *whoever acts imprudently, and gives occasion to suspicion, merits, not only censure, but, by giving a latitude to scandal, deserves the severest reproaches.*"

CHAP. VII.

“ Although parents have no right to tyrannize over the inclinations or persons of their children, yet disobedience to the commands, or even the omission of compliance with the desires of the cruellest father or mother, entails unhappiness on an offspring.”

“ I AM afraid,” said Seraphina, addressing her three friends, “ my narrative has been so tedious as to weary you, since it contains but few incidents and events, which must be dull in the extreme to any one, unless interested in my fate in the most extraordinary manner: flattering myself each of my auditors was so, and eager to convince them that the mysterious secrecy I am obliged to envelop myself in, proceeds not from any culpability attached to me, I have probably trespassed

on your patience, from an ardent desire to shew my sentiments and character, in order to prove myself perfectly innocent."

Erina, whose sympathetic heart had been particularly touched by the situation of the beautiful Seraphina, pressed her hand with the demonstration of tenderest affection, assuring her, that her history had greatly increased the lively interests she had before excited. "I loved you, my dear Seraphina," cried Erina, enthusiastically, "because I believed you were amiable as you were engaging; and the development of your mind has confirmed my opinion, and bound me your friend for ever!"

Lady Kinross, possessing a soul congenial with Erina's, had been equally interested by Seraphina's narrative; and seizing her other hand, assured her of an eternal friendship. "I trust," said Rosaline, with the animated yet gentle sweetness that characterized her, "occasions may present themselves to prove the sincerity and strength of my esteem and attachment both to Seraphina and Erina; for, in serving the former, I am sensible I shall essentially oblige the latter. I should, therefore, feel doubly happy in an opportunity of evincing my anxiety and readiness

to console Seraphina's griefs, and to render her situation less painful; and I am impatient to learn the sequel of her story, in order to discover the means of alleviating her sorrows, and affording her a constant asylum from every disagreeable circumstance that does, or may, attend her."

Seraphina had a strength of character that rendered all her feelings of the most energetic kind. Her gratitude towards Erina and Rosaline was profound, as her affection for them was exalted; and pressing the hand of each to her bosom, her expressive countenance declared sentiments too powerful for utterance, while she returned the warmest possible acknowledgments for kindness, which she declared, with enthusiasm, would impress her heart with the most animated friendship for Lady Kinross and Erina till the last moment of her existence. "The hope of proving myself worthy of your esteem and affection," said Seraphina, "has alone induced me to narrate the story of my life, the sequel of which, the extreme lateness of the hour now warns me to defer to another time."

Whilst Seraphina spoke, the convent bell summoned its inhabitants to midnight service.

The nun hastened from Seraphina's chamber to join her sisterhood in the chapel, after expressing an increased interest in the fate of the suffering girl, and promising to visit the party on the morrow, which, by appointment, were to meet on the following evening, after supper, in Lady Kinross's saloon, for the purpose of concluding the history now left unfinished.

As the three friends made a point of attending with the utmost regularity every devotional meeting of the convent, they followed Agnes to the chapel; and, on the succeeding night, repaired with her from the refectory to Rosaline's apartment, where Seraphina resumed her tale in the following manner:

“ The receipt of my mother's note, in some degree, calmed the perturbation of my mind, and thus enabled me to support my spirits through the remainder of the day. I passed all the morning in my own chamber; and when summoned to dinner, according to my expectation, found Senora Leonora alone; as my mother remained in her own apartment on a plea of indisposition, which could scarcely be termed an excuse for her not appearing below as usual,

for the uneasiness of her mind would have rendered her joining us at table, not only distressing, but impossible.

“ Her situation, of which I was informed by my governess on questioning her with much solicitude on the subject, affected me deeply. I suffered even more severely, perhaps, than my mother did, from my interference ; but neither the agitation I had occasioned my parent, nor the excessive anxiety I experienced myself, nor the innumerable difficulties in which I might consequently be involved, made me regret the part I had taken in an affair that seemed to me to implicate my honour with my mother’s virtue ; and I should have felt myself equally culpable towards her, as deficient in the preservation of my own innocence, had I sacrificed what I believed to be my duty, to save either my own sensibility or that of my parent. The consciousness of rectitude reconciled me to the undertaking an arduously painful task, and consoled me for the dreadful anticipation of some severe trials ; to encounter which with firmness, I endeavoured to prepare myself, by collecting all my presence of mind, and that fortitude which can alone be derived from right intentions and Divine assistance

in the performance of what seems equally difficult and proper.

“ Senora Leonora appeared moved by my situation, and at the same time evinced a reluctance to enter into any conversation on the subject of which I could not doubt her being perfectly informed. On my part, I was as averse from the slightest wish of mentioning any thing that could have the most distant allusion to circumstances I considered disgraceful to every one, even remotely connected with my mother; and at an earlier hour than usual, I retired to my room.

“ My nightly devotions had their accustomed effect of tranquillizing my mind; and I was about to prepare myself for some repose, when Senora demanded admittance, to inform me to hold myself in readiness to attend Donna Violante at a late hour that night, when I should be called to her apartment.

“ Assuring the Senora that I should obey any summons I might receive, I was left to reflection in the solitude of my chamber.

“ The darkness of night, combined with its

profound stillness, left my thoughts free to range amidst numberless vague conjectures, uncertain as my situation seemed mysterious. The clock struck eleven—twelve—and one!

“ My heart palpitated at every stroke ; and at length, a gentle tap at my chamber-door called me to open it, when I beheld my mother standing before me. Her aspect, at once sweet and dignified, excited my tenderest affection, and inspired a filial awe I had never experienced in an equal degree ; and as I bent forward, impelled by an irresistible sensation to salute my parent, I felt culpable in having dared to suspect her of any deviation from delicacy and virtue, which in her seemed personified.

“ My heart was full of indescribable sentiments ; but I kissed my mother’s hand in silence. She seemed much affected by this testimony of my filial duty ; and in accents of agitation, thus addressed me : ‘ You have often, my dear Seraphina, I am convinced, experienced an ardent desire to learn the particulars of your birth and situation, although, in obedience to my entreaties, you have refrained from making any enquiries on the subject.

“ The strict observance of my injunctions in every instance of your life, and especially in circumstances wherein all your private feelings have been sacrificed to duty, prove such self-command, prudence, and virtue, as entitle you to my fullest confidence. Come then, my child, and let me immediately introduce you to a father, who glories in such a daughter, and whose chief unhappiness proceeds from the inability of acknowledging you as such.’

“ My mother opening my chamber-door, as she concluded her speech, beckoned me to follow her ; but seizing her hand with precipitation, and drawing her gently into my room, I reclosed the door, and falling on one knee, I entreated my mother to spare me the pain of introducing me to a father whom I never could respect, since he had been the seducer of my mother.

“ I now, for the first time, Madam,’ continued I, with violent emotion, ‘ suspect myself to be the offspring of shame, in learning that your clandestine visitor is my father ; but know, my mother, that title cannot shield him from my contempt, my abhorrence !

“ If he be my parent, is he not also the au-

thor of your unhappiness—your destruction? However closely connected to me, I must, nay ought, to detest my mother's seducer. Fly with me instantly, Madam, I conjure you by every law human and divine,—fly with me this apode, which innocence should shun!

“ My dear child, my daughter,” cried my mother, smiling sweetly, whilst tears suffused her large, dark, soft, yet sparkling eyes, ‘ you are not the offspring of shame ; I have been unfortunate, though not guilty, in my union with your father. Attend me to my apartment, where he waits your coming to press you to a paternal bosom ; and, acquitting himself of every dishonourable act, prove himself worthy of your admiration, your affection, and filial reverence. In learning to estimate highly your father's uncommon worth, you will also learn to excuse and love me, notwithstanding my clandestine connection with the best of men ; who, for my sake, has incurred the risk of losing every worldly advantage. His tenderness for me makes him accuse himself unjustly of having caused me misfortunes, whereas I alone have been the occasion of his, whilst he interposed to save me from inevitable wretchedness.’

“ Surprise, anxiety, and mingled pain and

pleasure, kept me silent; and bending in tacit submission, I respectfully put my mother's hand to my lips, following her out of my chamber towards her own.

“ On entering it, I did not, however, see my father, as I had expected. The door was carefully locked; and as I stood in some amazement, wondering why my parent did not appear according to promise, I was still more astonished to see a picture move forward, and our visitor step from behind it, as from a door, which the portrait entirely concealed, and which opening with a secret spring, could never have been suspected as an entrance into the chamber from a subterranean passage that led to a cave in a mountain at some distance.

“ As I stood in mute surprise, my father advanced towards me, and enfolding me in his arms, said, ‘ My dearest Seraphina has, I trust, from her earliest years, loved and esteemed me as a friend; I would now endeavour to remove the late injurious impression she has received of me, by avowing myself lawfully united to Donna Violante, and that I have every right to claim from my child the duty and affection of a beloved and legitimate daughter. As such, my Seraphina,

I must now acknowledge you in secret; why I cannot do it openly will be explained in the relation I shall give you of my circumstances.'

"Agitated beyond measure by my still mysterious situation, and affected extremely by the caresses of a lately discovered father, I kissed his hand in silence, as a testimony of my filial attachment. Both my parents appeared very sensibly touched by the demonstration of my affection; and I found myself alternately pressed to the bosom of my father and mother, whilst I entreated the forgiveness of each for having dared to suspect either of the slightest deviation from propriety and virtue.

"I should not have idolized you, my child, as I do,' cried my father, 'had I believed you less delicate, honourable, and piously virtuous than you have ever proved yourself, and particularly in your recently painful situation. You are worthy, my Seraphina,' continued my father, 'of being Violante's daughter. Your mother's child and pupil could not fail to be amiable as her descent is noble. Much as you know of Donna Violante's perfections, you are not yet acquainted with half her admirable qualities. It shall be my business, however, in a brief account of them, to con-

vince you, that every virtue, in its utmost exaltation, extent, and refinement, renders your mother's character pre-eminently great, and worthy of your highest admiration, your constant imitation, and your enthusiastic love !'

" My mother smiled affectionately, in grateful acknowledgment of my father's animated eulogy ; and before I had time to assure him how deeply my heart was impressed by his desire that I should emulate my mother's virtues, she entreated him to begin the narrative of their meeting, union, and subsequent situation : and then addressing herself to me, she said, every circumstance of the tale would prove that my father was the most amiable, the most honourable, the most noble of men, the tenderest of husbands, the kindest of parents, and deserving of the highest esteem and the most ardent affection the warmest heart could cherish for the noblest qualities and superlative merit.'

" As my mother spoke, I seized and pressed her hand, united with my father's, to my lips and bosom, in demonstration that each of my parents should henceforth be equally dear to me. In obedience to their desires, I seated myself between them, and my father began his history,

which I must now relate in as succinct a manner as it will admit.

“ Descended from an ancient and noble family,” continued Seraphina, “ my grandfather, who was the youngest of many brothers, and consequently without fortune, acquired a handsome independence by a lucrative post ; and with the acquisition of wealth attained political influence and personal consequence, by the exertion of talents, which, at length, raised him to an eminent situation, and graced him with a title.

“ His abilities, however, were superior to his domestic qualities. In public life he was as a star ; in private society he was dark as a cloud. His genius was brilliant, but his temper was morose.

“ Having pretensions to a good alliance, he married a lady of rank, who was the most amiable of women, and whom his harsh disposition and severe manners soon sent to an untimely tomb ; for being of a delicate frame and the gentlest nature, she was ill calculated to be the companion of a character diametrically opposite to her own.

“ My father was extremely young when his mother died ; but the sweetness of her temper,

and softness of her manner, so different from his father's, made an indelible impression on his mind, which imbibed the tenderest love for the parent he lost, whilst he contracted a fear for the one that survived: and this sentiment, rendering every other subordinate to it, when he arrived at manhood all filial affection and confidence were suppressed by awe.

“ Although treated with extreme rigour, no expence was spared in his education, to complete which he visited the principal courts of Europe; and in the course of his travels arrived at Madrid.

“ Introduced into the first societies of that capital by the ambassador of his country to Spain, my father was soon distinguished in the highest circle of its proud metropolis as a man of birth, figure, and talents; and, as such, courted and generally admired in the best company.

“ At a ball given by his friend the ambassador, his lady presented him to a crowd of the Spanish nobility; and amidst a brilliant circle of belles, my father's admiration selected a virgin of pre-eminent beauty as his partner for the night, whom, on addressing to solicit the honour of her hand, he found superlatively charming. The lovely maiden

was Donna Violante, daughter and sole heiress of an ancient duke, one of the grandees who most prided himself on his consequence at the court of Madrid.

“ My mother was in the bloom of youth and in the meridian blaze of beauty. My father, some years older, had attained that period of life when the heart is most susceptible of that refined sentiment that is awakened by the impression of female loveliness on the fancy.

“ Donna Violante displayed inimitable grace in every movement; her manners were easy and captivatingly sweet, whilst her deportment was at once modest and dignified; her conversation was free, yet extremely delicate, and united elegant wit with infinite sentiment; she was equally animated, gentle, and sensible; and as my father began the evening by admiring her personal charms, he concluded the night by idolizing her delightful mental qualities.

“ The duke, her father, to whom he had been introduced by the ambassador as his particular friend, gave the young stranger a polite invitation to his house, which was eagerly accepted by my father. In a course of visits and entertainments,

he had many opportunities of observing that his attentions had made a deep impression on the lovely maid, whose captive he became almost at the first glance. True love, however, is always too timid to declare itself immediately ; and my father and Donna Violante had each engaged their tenderest affections by the language of looks, before the lover had summoned sufficient resolution to avow his passion, except by assiduities, that pleaded too powerfully to be displeasing to their object, whose varying colour and trembling sensibility at my father's sight, confessed to him he was the possessor of her heart.

“ Flattered by the delightful discovery quick-sighted love had made, my father became deeply enamoured, and although his passion was undeclared, it could no longer escape the observation of Donna Violante's father.

“ A bigotted slave to the love of money and to ambition, which, unsatiated by the highest consequence in Spain, by his influence at court, and by the riches he possessed, led him to desire an accumulation of greater wealth, a more extended power, and that his daughter should unite the dignity of his family to one of equal rank in his own country ; he marked, with a fearful eye, her pre-

possession in favour of a foreigner, a youth not yet arrived at independence in the world, and who, although nobly descended and highly connected, had neither a present splendid establishment, nor a title in immediate possession.

“ All these considerations induced the duke to remove Violante out of my father’s way, and place her in the convent, where she had been educated with her younger sister, destined to a religious seclusion, in order that the fortune of the family centering in Donna Violante might, by the attractive power of a rich dower, entitle her to an alliance that would aggrandize himself.

“ As it was impossible for him to forbid any young man of fashion, introduced by a diplomatic character of high consequence at the court of his king, entrance into his house ; especially when the gentleman had, in every instance, conducted himself in the most unexceptionable manner, the duke was resolved not to lose any time in contracting Donna Violante to some nobleman of high consequence, and to immure her till some great alliance was settled which would put an end to any hopes of success which my father might have flattered himself he should obtain.

“ No longer attracted to the duke's residence as formerly, by the beauty of his soul's idol, he gained the most particular information relative to her situation through the constant intelligence of a noble Spanish lady, who was maternal aunt to Donna Violante ; and who, having loved her as a daughter from infancy, and having entirely supplied a mother's care to her niece since she lost that parent in her childhood, had most feelingly lamented the severity to which Donna Violante was subjected by the harsh disposition of a father, that considered her more as his slave, than as a daughter whose happiness he was bound to consult.

“ The exemplary filial duty that lovely girl had ever paid a morose parent, completed her matchless character, and rendered her at once the object of admiration and compassion throughout Madrid, where she was equally beloved for her extraordinary virtue as she was celebrated for her uncommon beauty.

“ As she was the subject of conversation every where as much when absent as present, her praise in all places administered fresh ardour to the passion with which she had inspired my father, who soon felt that to live without her was im-

possible; so that the deprivation of seeing her, instead of diminishing, increased his flame.

“ In this state of mind, the public voice announced to him the object of his enthusiastic love was affianced to the first grandee of Spain. This intelligence was confirmed to my father by the aunt of Donna Violante. He also learned, through the same channel, that the lovely maiden was reduced to a state of despair by the dreadful prospect of being united to a man whom she abhorred; as her destined husband was equally despicable in person as he was detestable in character.

“ The manner in which my father received this information, confirmed the aunt of Donna Violante in the opinion she had long entertained of his devotion to her niece. The noble kinswoman of that unhappy girl had also discovered her secret attachment, and, in conformity with Spanish customs, told the concealed and despairing lover, that knowing him to be a man of noble family, judging him to be virtuous, and believing that her niece’s felicity would be ensured by an union with him, she would promote it by every means in her power, if authorised by him to take any measures for that purpose.

“ Delighted, beyond description, to find the nearest female relation of Donna Violante in his dearest interest, he was urgent with her to press his suit with all the influence of parental authority, and the warmest and most delicate ardour of an empassioned, yet respectful lover.

“ Thus commissioned, the aunt of Donna Violante professed herself his warmest and most faithful friend ; and having constant access to her niece, performed the mission with which enthusiastic love had entrusted her.

“ The office was fulfilled with all the warmth and fidelity my father’s ardour could have desired ; and he was soon informed by his noble friend, that, although Donna Violante had confessed herself deeply impressed with admiration by the virtues of her lover, and considered herself highly honoured by his election and professions, yet she could never consent to tarnish the lustre of her high birth, and infringe the duty she owed her father, by carrying on any clandestine intercourse, even with the man whom she owned to be the possessor of her affections. She desired her aunt to inform her lover, that his addresses must be laid before her parent ; and that in case of the duke’s refusal to permit her union with the only

man whom she could feel an attachment to, she should solicit the indulgence her father would find it impossible to deny her, namely, to assume the veil, instead of marrying any person who had hitherto addressed, or might yet propose for her. Donna Violante, notwithstanding she had suffered much from her father's severity, had not presumed to think him so cruel a tyrant as to enforce her union with an object hateful to her, when she was ready to give the greatest proof of her filial submission, in voluntarily resigning, without even a secret murmur, that lover on whom her happiness depended, if he were in the least disagreeable to the duke.

“ Donna Isabella added, that she had, in vain, endeavoured to dissuade her niece from an attempt which might certainly prove fruitless, and would probably be fatal to Violante; as the duke, on knowing her affection placed without his direction, would be more strenuous in exerting his paternal authority in favour of the man he had chosen for his daughter's husband. Violante's aunt added, that she was aware my father would meet with no encouragement from the duke, and mentioned her apprehensions on the subject, assuring my father, that a favoured lover in Spain

had every thing to dread from a jealous rival's malevolence.

“ My father told Donna Isabella, that the flattering sentiments her lovely niece had honoured him with, by professing towards him, must bind him to perform her will ; consequently he should certainly address the duke according to her desire ; and after having paid obedience to her commands, he should hold himself obliged, by every law, to be her champion : adding an animated declaration to his noble friend, that all the power of a cruel father to injure him, and all the daggers an enraged rival might employ against him, should never deter him from using every endeavour to shield the object of his adoration from paternal oppression and a detested suitor's pursuit.

“ Donna Isabella expressed much delight at the testimony of my father's spirit and his devotion to her niece ; telling him, his gallantry and enthusiasm rendered him worthy of Violante's love ; and that in case she should carry her ideas of filial duty and female delicacy so far as to refuse eloping with her lover, to escape her father's cruelty and her own sacrifice to the most disgusting and wickedest of men, her aunt assured my

father, she would employ every effort to assist in Violante's rescue.

“ In compliance with her strict notions of decorum, my father disclosed his suit to the duke ; and, according to expectation, was rejected. The young foreigner's overture thus publicly made drew upon him the hatred of Don Sebastian ; who, notwithstanding the protestations of the duke that his daughter should be forced to complete the engagement made for her, burned with so dire a vengeance against the youthful lover he was sensible could not fail of being preferred to him by the lovely creature whom he was certain of possessing against her inclinations, that he planned the destruction of his hated rival, fearing him with all the suspicion of a jealous Spaniard.

“ As Donna Isabella had been prevented by motives of prudence from publicly encouraging the addresses of the young stranger, she was not interdicted the constant communication she had always maintained with her niece. Their daily intercourse afforded my father the means of regular intelligence relative to Donna Violante. He learned, that preparations were already commenced to hasten her marriage, and that when every thing was arranged for its celebration, the devoted

victim would be brought home for the solemnization of her dreadful sacrifice. He was also informed, that Donna Violante was reduced almost to a state of despair by her melancholy situation, from which she thought it was impossible she could extricate herself without infringing innumerable principles her morality and piety rendered sacred in her opinion. Her mind was agonized by the hourly struggles of sentiments in contrariety with each other, and duties, so opposed, they could not be reconciled. Female timidity, the delicacy of her sex, the dignity of her soul, the reverence she felt due to the parental character, even when its authority seemed too rigorously exerted, made her start back with horror at the idea of an elopement, which she considered as a step that must be disgraceful to herself, and injurious to the honour of her name; even when it was, as in her own situation, forced by the extreme exigency of a case equally cruel and hopeless. On the other hand, the self-same feelings of feminine gentleness, her love of decorum, the exaltation of her mind, its devotion to piety, made her exquisite sensibility shudder at the prospect of an extorted sacrifice of herself to a man, to think of an union with whom was shocking in the extreme; as it would sully her purity; degrade her in her own eyes, and in the estimation of the

world; and would endanger even the subversion of her religious principles, by rendering the duties of her state not merely difficult to perform, but impossible to accomplish.

“ Thus torn by the conflicts of her soul, the dreadful time approached which was to decide her miserable fate.

“ Liberated from the confinement of a convent, and yet shackled by constant restraint of vigilant observation, the wretched Donna Violante felt like a prisoner released from a dungeon for immediate execution, yet still retained as a victim in galling chains, which would not be unriveted till the fatal moment that was, by the stroke of death alone, to set her free!

“ In the meanwhile, her aunt was occupied in concerting measures with my father to save Violante. His visits to Donna Isabella were, however, so clandestine, that she was considered, even by the watchful duke, as an abettor of his plan in favour of his son-in-law elect, rather than as the confederate of a scheme to counteract his intentions respecting his daughter; and in consequence of this opinion, she was permitted to visit Donna Isabella, at whose house, in several

interviews, my father personally urged his suit so successfully, that he at length prevailed on Violante to consent to fly with him from her cruel persecutors.

“ Whilst the most splendid preparations were hastened at the duke's for her immediate nuptials with the detestable Don Sebastian, every thing was arranged for her private marriage with my father at Donna Isabella's.

“ The day was at last fixed for the solemnization of the ceremony at her father's; and as soon as her aunt had settled every necessary affair for my father's union, and his escape with Donna Violante, an early day was named for performing the holy rites, which were to bestow on him the object of his love, give him a sacred title to her possession, and a legitimate claim to protect her from every outrage.

“ The interference of an aunt whom Violante loved and revered with filial affection, as the representative of an adored and lamented mother, had reconciled her to a clandestine marriage and elopement, to which her delicacy would never have consented, had it not been authorised by the advice of a parent, she felt had a right to her

obedience as a daughter, both from the bonds of consanguinity, and the maternal care and tenderness she had experienced from Donna Isabella.

“ Three days previous to the time fixed for Donna Violante’s nuptials with Don Sebastian, she was privately married to my father in the morning. At midnight he was to carry her off in a carriage provided for their flight, with Senora Leonora, a respectable gentlewoman, an old friend of the family, whom unfortunate circumstances had reduced to the station of duenna to Donna Violante. The duke’s barbarity in persevering in his cruel intention of sacrificing his daughter’s happiness to his avarice and pride, had detached the amiable senora from his interest, and bound her so firmly to Violante’s, that she promised to become an indefatigable agent in her release, whatever it might cost her ; and her gentle charge was too grateful not to be mindful of the safety and happiness of her affectionate duenna. Knowing her to be a dependant on the duke, and sensible that he had the power to injure, irreparably, the person whose situation rendered her entirely responsible for the intended elopement, Donna Violante had made as one condition of consenting to my father’s suit, his assent to protect Senora Leonora, by carrying her with them to his coun-

try, where she would be safe from every persecution which the duke's high power and influence in Spain would undoubtedly employ against her. To the entreaty of protecting an amiable being, a helpless woman, and especially a person dear to the heart of his beloved Violante, my father assured her it would afford him extreme pleasure to make the senora a partner in their flight, and that it would particularly gratify him, that his lovely bride should have the satisfaction of a female companion, not only during their journey, but also in the country to which he was about to travel; where, as a foreigner, his adored Violante would find a comfort in retaining near her a lady of her own nation; and that he should therefore request Senora Leonora to consider herself entirely as one of his family, as long as it might be agreeable to them both. This delicate manner of conferring an obligation which evinced equal sentiment and generosity, had made the liveliest impression on the grateful and exalted soul of Donna Violante. At the sacred altar, attended by her faithfully attached duenna, and under the encouraging auspices of her beloved aunt, she plighted her eternal faith to my father, and received the pledge of his without one regret, except that her cruel parent's consent was wanting to complete her happiness on receiving the nuptial

benediction ; which, rescuing her from horrid captivity with the wicked wretch she detested, bound her indissolubly, she believed for life, to the most virtuous and beloved of men.

“ It had been agreed, that after the hour of midnight she was to repair with her duenna to a secret gate of the duke’s garden, opening into a suburb of Madrid, where my father was to wait her arrival, and by a concerted signal of mutual recognition, she was to elope without any of the party uttering a syllable, lest their voices might betray them.

“ At the approach of evening, having taken, as she imagined, a last farewell of her beloved aunt, Donna Violante was waiting in her chamber in tremblingly anxious expectation of the appointed hour of flight ; when, about nine o’clock, she was surprised by the arrival of Donna Isabella, whose agitation, imperfectly concealed, gave her unhappy niece the most dreadful apprehensions. Those, although of the most terrific kind, appeared light in comparison of the shocking truth cautiously revealed to the unfortunate bride by her aunt ; who had just heard the news, report had busily circulated through the city of Madrid, that the handsome and favourite foreign cavalier

(the epithet by which the lover of Donna Violante was distinguished) had been assassinated in the street where he resided. To the intelligence of his having fallen, and been found apparently dead and bathed in blood by some passing strangers, was added the information, of his having been carried to the surgeon's who lived opposite his apartments, by whom he was immediately recognized; and who instantly dressed his wounds, and had him conveyed to his own home, where he still lay without much sign of animation.

“ This shocking intelligence threw Donna Violante into repeated fainting fits, so quick in succession, that her aunt was seriously alarmed on her account. This alarm of the affectionate parent of the wretched bride was considerably increased by the abrupt entrance of her father, who came to announce the arrival of Don Sebastian on a visit to Donna Violante. Her indisposition, however, which the prudent Donna Isabella attributed to the speedy approach of the agitating wedding-day, very luckily afforded a sufficient excuse for the wretched girl not attending the duke's summons to an interview, it would have been absolutely impossible, in her circumstances, to have endured. Irritated, instead of being softened, by the view of his daughter's

sufferings, originating from his cruel tyranny, he left her in a state of insensibility, to pass his evening in the company of Don Sebastian, and entertain him convivially, committing the care of Donna Violante to her aunt.

“ On recovering from a state of mental and corporeal torpor, the almost distracted bride believed herself widowed by the machinations of Don Sebastian : she had every reason to think that his villany had armed assassins for the destruction of her lover ; who, by her imprudent desire, had made himself the object of jealousy to a character sufficiently depraved for the commission of the blackest enormities. She doubted not that he had bribed spies to watch her so sedulously, as to be apprized of her late proceedings and intentions ; and that, in consequence of having known her union with my father that morning, and the plan of flight agreed on for that night, Don Sebastian had hired bravos to destroy his rival. She considered herself, therefore, guilty of her husband's horrid death ; and saw no means left of escaping a marriage with the wretch always hateful to her, and now more odious than ever, since ensanguined by the murder of the most amiable of men. The shocking idea of being accessory to the crime, of having sharpened the dagger for his destruction, and

thus to have braved the horrid fate of being, in two days, united for life to the murderer, who, on her bridal-day, had widowed her, agonised her to distraction. Nearly frantic with terror and despair, she raved wildly for some time, until exhausted by the violence of her feelings, she sunk into a despondence more terrific and heart-rending than the bursts of anguish, that, at intervals, under all the appearance of insanity, threatened the total subversion of her reason.

“ Donna Isabella, scarcely less wretched than herself, was unable to console her ; and the amiable Senora Leonora, deeply affected by the fate of the unfortunate Donna Violante and her aunt, and, implicated in the plan that had drawn on them already a dreadful misfortune, that foretold the direst future vengeance, in agonizing anticipation beheld all the powers of justice, and all the inquisitorial authorities of the church, preparing chastisements and cruel torments for the infringement of the civil and ecclesiastical laws of a country, where the monarchical and clerical government was absolute. Scarcely able to restrain her own feelings, the afflicted duenna rather increased than lessened the weight of woe which pressed heavily on the heart of Violante, grieved equally by her own miseries and those she reproached herself severely for having occasioned

beings most dear to her, both on account of their virtues and their exertions to serve her. A prey to the bitterest remorse, she spent the night in tears, convulsive sighs, and agonizing retrospection and anticipation; that made her too ill to admit of her aunt's retiring home, or even leaving her for an instant.

“ As the clock struck twelve Violante shuddered; a tremor seized her every nerve, and a violent palpitation at her heart, seemed to her like the last struggles of retiring life, as the dreadful thought of her husband's death shot through her mind.

“ Donna Isabella marked the deadly paleness spreading over the agonized features of her niece, and apprehensive she would again sink into dangerous swoons, she opened a balcony projecting into the garden, to lead Donna Violante to a seat, where the refreshing breeze of night, fanning the surrounding shrubs, might restore the retiring spirits of the fainting girl. Too much debilitated by the languor of grief to walk without support on either side, Senora Leonora sorrowfully assisted Donna Isabella to conduct their charge into the balcony; where, whilst her aunt was busied in applying a smelling-bottle as a preventive against exhaustion, and the duenna was engaged in

rubbing a stimulative perfume on the temples of Donna Violante, a rustling amongst the bushes, growing round the balcony, aroused her by affright more effectually than all the remedies imaginable that could have been prescribed by the profoundest medical science.

“ Ere the timid girl had time to mention the cause of her alarm, it was increased by the figure of a man, muffled in a great cloak, springing from the thick foliage ; and, before the three terrified females could hurry from the scene of apprehended danger, a disguised person, at one bound, vaulted into the balcony, and caught the screaming Donna Violante in his arms !

“ Her astonishment, however, was equal to her joy, on finding herself pressed to the bosom of her husband !

“ Apprehensive lest her shriek might summon any one to her apartment, made the surprised and agitated Donna Violante entreat her aunt to repair to the duke's chambers, whilst Senora Leonora, in other parts of the habitation, reconnoitered and endeavoured to prevent interruption, that their unexpected visitor might escape discovery, and disclose the apparently extraordinary circumstances of his situation. Although both Donna

Isabella and Senora Leonora were almost equally impatient as Donna Violante to learn the mysterious events of that evening, yet they were too watchful over the preservation of the agitated pair to delay any measure requisite for their protection, situated as they were in imminent peril of a discovery, that would undoubtedly be fatal to both; and in order, therefore, to prevent probable impending danger, the prudent aunt and vigilant duenna left the miraculously united lovers to discover to each other a tale of mutual suffering, whilst their affectionate guards were employed in watching over them and providing for their safety.

“ In the meanwhile, innumerable interrogations on the part of Donna Violante led my father to inform her, that as he was going out of the house where he lodged about dusk, he remarked a person follow him as if closely observant of his motions; from the suspicious appearance of the man, whom he believed to be a spy, he watched him narrowly, and instead of going to Donna Isabella's, where a private farewell meeting had been appointed about eight o'clock, he took several short turns, and, still pursued by his observer, retraced the way back to his own apartments, fearful lest his scheme of escape that night had been discovered; yet resolved to rescue his bride at all

hazards. My father added, that on reaching the street where he lived, it was quite dark, and that just as he was entering the door of his house he received a violent blow on the back from the villain, whom, instead of avoiding, he pursued, in hopes of securing him so as to escape future observation from the spy of Don Sebastian, and by that means evade the treachery intended by him. My father continued to inform the trembling Violante, that he had scarcely proceeded a few yards from his door in pursuit of the flying villain, when, at his whistle, several ruffians rushed out of a dark alley, and, surrounding him, made several stabs at him whilst he was endeavouring to defend himself against them. That, however, was merely the impulse of the moment; for, being entirely unarmed, and, upon reflection, feeling resistance vain against several determined ruffians, provided with weapons of assassination, he threw himself groaning on the ground, and lying motionless for a moment, the bravos, believing their bloody commission fulfilled, fled in all haste, fearful of detection for the supposed completed murder.

“ Donna Violante shuddered whilst my father continued to relate, that several passengers in the street avoided him out of apprehension for their safety in meddling with an affair in which inno-

cence might be implicated with guilt. He added, that having lain some time without being attended to, an alguazil came up ; and, summoning assistance, had him conveyed to the nearest surgeon's.

“ Alas ! it is then too true,” exclaimed Donna Violante, ‘ that you are wounded ! and I am the wretched cause of your sufferings, and of your present danger, in being the occasion of your exposing yourself to innumerable new perils, both from the emissaries of the detestable Don Sebastian, and the risk of rendering your wounds certainly mortal by being unmindful of them !’ To the affectionate ejaculation of his weeping bride, my father replied, laughing, that the wounds, inflicted by her bright eyes were infinitely deeper and more incurable than those aimed at him by his rival’s jealousy. Donna Violante shook her head, assuring my father she had heard of his having lain senseless for a length of time ; and, endeavouring to express all she had suffered on his account, and her present alarms about his state and situation relative to Don Sebastian and the duke, now together under the same roof with the object of their vengeance, my father gently strove to calm her agitation, by declaring the account of his injury had been greatly exaggerated. Adding, he had flattered himself the rumour of

his accident would not have reached her. He congratulated her, at the same time, on the publicity of the assassination, as it would undoubtedly operate much to their safety.

“ Under the idea of having probably killed, and undoubtedly disabled me for the execution of my plan to-night,’ continued my father, ‘ the duke and my rival will be persuaded of the inutility of watching the victims, frustrated in their intended scheme ; and thus we may escape unobserved, and shall be already far advanced in our road to a place of security ere our flight be suspected.’

“ Donna Isabella and Senora Leonora now returned with the information that every thing was secured against a surprisal by any of the household. My father recapitulated to them the account he had given Donna Violante ; adding, that shocked at not finding her in the garden, according to appointment, and astonished at not receiving any countersign to the signal he gave of being ready in waiting at the garden gate, he had been urged forward in apprehension for the safety of his beloved bride, resolved to brave every peril for her rescue.

“ On learning from my father that his wounds were trifling, that they occasioned him no suffering, that he had taken measures to evade the possibility of pursuit, and that a carriage was in readiness for flight, Donna Isabella pressed his immediate departure with his fellow fugitives, assuring them, she would instantly go to the duke’s apartments, and acquaint him she had left his daughter much restored, and likely to be perfectly well on the ensuing day. Senora Leonora then tranquillised the party, by telling them, she had given express orders that Donna Violante might not be disturbed until a late hour on the morrow; when the discovery of their elopement could be of little consequence, as they would then be too distant for any probability of being traced.

“ My father, Donna Violante, and Senora Leonora, now embraced Donna Isabella; who recommending them each to Heaven’s protection, and bidding them all most tenderly adieu, bestowed a parental blessing on the fugitive couple.

“ The bride then, supported by her husband and duenna, got over the balcony railing, and striking into the most sequestered allies of the garden, reached the gate in trepidation; and thence pursuing their way to the carriage in waiting, were

soon on the road to a place of security. Having, by rapid and unremitted travelling, soon cleared the boundaries which separate the frontiers of Spain and Portugal, my father stopped with his fair companions at a retired village in the latter kingdom, where he had purposed to remain concealed until he had concerted matters for returning to his paternal home. Aware that much management would be requisite to secure for himself a tolerable reception from his father, who was much too severe a parent to welcome him with a smile ere the completion of the time destined for his tour ; my father was sensible, that his revisiting his native country, accompanied by a wife, without apprising his parent of his marriage, would considerably add to criminate him on his unexpected return home. He had, therefore, resolved, very delicately as well as prudently, not to hazard a first disagreeable impression to all parties by the introduction of his bride by surprise ; on the contrary, he had determined to prepare his father for his return with a wife, by interesting the former in favour of the latter, in the hope, that by such means, he might obtain his ardent wish of introducing Donna Violante to a father, whose best feelings would attach him to her with paternal tenderness.

“ The first leisure moment after his arrival in Portugal, my father penned a letter to his parent, acquainting him with the high birth, the personal charms, and the mental perfections of Donna Violante; adding the particulars of her miserable situation with a cruelly tyrannical father, who purposed to sacrifice her to the most wicked and detested of men. My father ventured to disclose to his the deep and indelible impression the lovely virgin had made on his heart; that he had reason to believe her affections irrevocably engaged to him; and flattered himself, that as their happiness depended on each other, his father’s goodness would be so indulgent as to complete his felicity by sanctioning their union with his blessing, and by affording paternal tenderness and protection to a lovely girl, who was ready to feel for him, and pay him a daughter’s most dutiful affection.

“ My father, animated by the theme on which he wrote, thought he had been too eloquent to fail in awakening the liveliest interest, and obtaining the indulgence for which he had submissively sued.

“ His next care was to dispatch an account of Donna Violante’s safety to his kind friend, her aunt.

In his letter to her, leisure and affection prompted him to be particular in the relation of every thing concerning themselves; and he, therefore, mentioned to Donna Isabella, that, although he considered himself indissolubly united to his lovely bride, honour and love equally bound him to behave towards her with the respectful deference of a lover, till, by a second nuptial benediction, conformable to the laws and ceremonies of his country, he should feel himself bound by ties, which no power could dispute, nor malice call in question, by litigation.

“ His reason for this conduct, which he hinted in the most delicate manner to his bride, endeared him, if possible, doubly to her pure and exalted soul. Her mind, congenial with his in every feeling, was calculated justly to appreciate the refinement of his ideas, the nobleness of his conduct, and the strength of his virtue; and idolizing his character as much as he adored her perfections, her whole heart watched, in his looks and motions, every desire of his, with a wish to anticipate all that might be most pleasing to him.

“ Thus situated in a calmly secure retreat, the united lovers passed the hours in mutual faith and entire confidence, satisfied with the present

felicity, whilst anticipating superior enjoyments, enhanced in value by the perils at which security had been purchased. But the joy of Donna Violante was of short duration. The flower of human happiness blooms but to wither in the continual change of mortal scenes. Her anxious affection soon perceived a livid paleness obscure the wonted animation of my father's countenance; and, while with tender solicitude she marked this alteration in his features, and universal languor rendered it absolutely impossible for him any longer to conceal the sufferings he had for some time hidden, to spare uneasiness to his beloved Violante, she at length learned, by an extorted confession, that his wounds, of which his love had made so light to her, were painful; and that a continual fever occasioned his paleness and debility, that would soon, he said, be removed by the medical assistance she pressed him to recur to; and which she at length discovered he had not neglected, as she reproached him with doing; but that, in tenderness to her feelings, he had wished to spare her the knowledge that any chirurgical attendance was necessary since the first dressing of his wounds, which he had represented as mere scratches. As the increase of illness now made it impossible for him to go abroad for medical advice, as he had hitherto done, the surgeon of the village visited

him; and finding him alarmingly ill, requested to have a consultation on his case. A physician of eminence was sent for from a neighbouring city; and after he had seen and prescribed for my father, Donna Violante enquired so anxiously about his situation, that the medical gentlemen felt it would be a greater cruelty to conceal than to reveal the danger in which they apprehended their patient to be; they, therefore, informed the distressed Donna Violante, that her husband's condition was perilous, from his having exerted himself, and undertaking a journey at a time when the utmost repose was requisite to prevent the exacerbation of fever in his wounded state.

“ This intelligence pierced the heart of Donna Violante with deep and innumerable wounds. But enjoined to conceal her agitation from the object of her love and solicitude, she watched him by day and by night, racked almost to distraction by a grief she constrained herself to conceal under the assumed smile of placidity. In her assiduous attendance on my father she discovered, that what he had termed a *stroke*, in delicacy to her feelings, was in reality a stab with a poniard, which the assassin who had followed him had intended to be mortal. Providence, however, had rendered the

villain's hand false to his purpose, who seeing his dagger had failed, contrary to his hopes and expectation, summoned to his aid ruffians, whom he wished not to share with him the promised profits of the murder to which he had been hired. My father also bore the marks of two smaller gashes, which he had received from the stilettoes of the bravos who stopped his pursuit of the first assassin. The mourning Donna Violaute, knowing herself to be the cause of her husband's sufferings, was inconsolable.

“ In the midst of this dire distress, a letter from her aunt announced, that a secret malediction from the duke's rage had been the only consequence of her flight, as her father had avoided publishing her elopement. Donna Isabella added, that as ambition had been the sole spring of Don Sebastian's and the duke's intended alliance, they had each consoled themselves with the intention of still effecting their mutual advantage and aggrandisement by the means of an union of family, a reciprocal increase of influence, and a joint accumulation of riches, by a projected marriage between Don Sebastian and the sister of his late intended bride.

“ Donna Isabella mentioned, as pleasing intel-

ligence, that the purposed assassination of my father had been assigned as the reason of his suddenly leaving Madrid for a place of security. The theme, she said, was too common to excite surprise amongst the Spaniards, whose violent passions seek sanguinary vengeance for slight offences.

“ In consequence of Donna Isabella’s prudent measures relative to the flight of her niece, it had been attributed by the duke entirely to the duenna, as she was the partner in the elopement of her charge. Donna Isabella mentioned, that being unsuspected of any part in that affair, she had been entrusted with the care of her niece Dorothea; who was now liberated from the convent to become her companion, until the ceremony of her nuptials should take place. Donna Violante’s aunt added, that in order to tranquilize the fears of Dorothea for her sister’s situation, it had been in part revealed to her. ‘ She knows,’ continued Donna Isabella in her letter, ‘ that Violante is happy under the protection of an adoring husband, and solicits the use of my pen to say what follows :—

“ Most beloved and amiable of sisters! my heart congratulates you on an emancipation from the miserable fate that awaits me. I experience

consolation, in the midst of wretchedness, in the idea that I suffer in your stead. The peaceful gloom of a convent was an elysium in comparison to the state to which my father's will condemns the remainder of my life : but I am determined to bear calmly every possible woe that may await me ; supported by the idea, that mortals are born to trials ; and that to submit to affliction with patience, and to endeavour to perform our duties with religious obedience, may be accepted by Divine mercy, in lieu of that exalted virtue which may be superior to my abilities. Write to me, my beloved sister, to console me in affliction, that will be alleviated by the certainty of your happiness. May you, my Violante, be as blessed as you merit to be ! Your secret shall be safe with me. Nothing shall make me betray the place of your retreat should you confide it to my secrecy : but should this confidence cost you an alarm, I demand nothing from you but the general intelligence of your health and felicity ; which I request may be addressed to me under cover to our kind aunt. This precaution will be necessary, as I can never hope to be mistress of myself when fate unites me to the tyrant Don Sebastian ; at whose frowns I must always tremble equally for you and myself. Farewell ! and ever remember with affection your

sister Dorothea, who regards you with the sincerest love.'

" Donna Violante shed innumerable tears over the plaintive and tender epistle of a sister whom her happiness had sacrificed to misery. Bitter and incessant lamentations on this subject, which seemed to have destroyed for ever the peace of his lovely bride, deeply afflicted my father, and he mourned with her the fate of Dorothea. ' Oh ! that I could save my beloved sister !' cried Donna Violante, her fine eyes streaming with tears.—' She shall be rescued from wretchedness !' exclaimed my father ; ' and by me !' added he, starting up. ' Exertion is necessary for me,' he continued, ' and I will return to Madrid, snatch Dorothea from Sebastian, and bear her in safety to a sister's arms.'

' A beam of joy illumined the countenance of Donna Violante, called forth by exultation at the idea that her husband's generosity might save her sister : but the flush of ecstasy was transient ; for an instant's reflection represented to her warily feeling heart, that her amiable lover and Dorothea would most probably fall a joint and dreadful sacrifice to the undertaking her useless lamentations had suggested. The thought renewed her

tears, and she ejaculated, ‘No! I have unhappily caused too much suffering and peril already to the objects of my love. I would save my sister from the dreadful fate to which my escape has condemned her; but I must not again be the occasion of risking a life more precious to me than my own. In leaving me,’ cried Donna Violante to my father, ‘you sign the warrant of my death. You will be equally, and more certainly, the instrument of my sister’s rescue, by waiting with me here till our kind aunt may find an opportunity of assisting the escape of Dorothea. That, perhaps, can be effected more easily without your return to Madrid; where your presence would create suspicion, and might lead to a discovery that would undoubtedly be fatal to us all. It will not be difficult for Donna Isabella to find a trusty person to be my sister’s guide to us; but your attempting her rescue, and being the companion of her flight, would most probably fail in saving her; and might, in many ways, prove certainly fatal to you, and consequently would be destructive, not only to my happiness, but to my life.’

“Unwilling to occasion a moment’s uneasiness to his timid bride, my father consented to be guided by her wishes and advice; and permitted

her to follow her desires in dispatching a letter to Donna Isabella, containing a solicitation of that parent's continuing her endeavours to ensure their felicity by contriving a means for Dorothea's joining them in their secure retreat. In reply to the lines she had addressed to her, Donna Violante inclosed, under cover to her aunt, a most affectionate billet, and invitation to Dorothea, to take refuge from her troubles in the arms of a sister, who could alone find peace in the hope of having a power to repair the threatened injury to a victim ready to suffer patiently in her stead. 'To save you from the misery preparing for you, through my means, my beloved Dorothea,' said her sister, 'will not be conferring an obligation, because it is merely the performance of a service, which justice imperiously commands as an indispensable duty.'

"To this billet my father, with an elegant grace, added a few words under his signature, expressive of a nobly generous mind, that delighted in an opportunity of performing benefits, and of doing favours with a delicacy, which testified he considered the acceptance of them as an obligation.

"Whilst impatiently waiting the effect of the letter to Madrid, and an answer to that he had

dispatched to his father, the amiable lover of Donna Violante was, by her assiduous care, restored to a state of health that promised the re-establishment of the strength, his wounds, and their bad consequences, had considerably impaired. The danger that had caused so much alarm was not of long continuance; but his recovery seemed tedious to Donna Violante; who ceased not to lament the sufferings she had occasioned, even when they were past.

“ Donna Isabella, in an immediate reply to the letter addressed to herself and Dorothea, assured my father and Donna Violante, that their sister felt most grateful for the lively interest taken in her fate; and, accepting their invitation with delight, would eagerly seize the first possible opportunity of effecting her escape from persecution to the asylum offered by fraternal affection, which should ever be repaid by the best testimonies of sisterly regard that might be in her power to testify to the most amiable and generous of brothers. Under that title Dorothea addressed a few lines of acknowledgment, elegantly expressive of gratitude and affection for my father and Donna Violante; adding, that every success was to be hoped from the zeal and assiduity evinced by

their kind aunt for her liberation from paternal tyranny.

“ This agreeable intelligence, united with the daily amendment in my father's health, operated as a cordial balm towards the restoration of Donna Violante's spirits, and little seemed wanting for the completion of their felicity, when a letter from my father's home announced to him, that his parent was resolved never to consent to his union with a foreigner; and that if he did not instantly break off all intercourse with the object of his admiration, and return home as soon as possible after the receipt of that summons, he should no longer be considered as a son by his incensed father.

“ Mine was too well acquainted with the inexorable disposition of his parent, to hope any future relaxation of a severity, which the most dutiful submission of his whole life had never been able to overcome. He now congratulated himself on the cautious manner in which prudence had couched his letter. His father's conduct had always repressed instead of encouraging confidence. Unconquerable sentiment, necessity, and the habits of his life had established a reserve in his

mind towards his parent equally repugnant to his nature as it was contrary to his principles; which could only have justified a concealment suggested as requisite in a delicate and difficult case. His position, relative to Donna Violante, had engaged both his feelings and honour to unite himself instantly to an object whose affections he should otherwise have gained at the expence of her peace. He had strong reason to believe, that his pretension to her hand had hurried the duke to seek a match for her, and press her immediate marriage with a man she would have been, perhaps, permitted to reject for a lover more agreeable to her, had not that privilege been refused her, under the idea of her preference for one displeasing to her father as a son-in-law. To rescue the object of his love from a situation to which she had been reduced on his account, required a quickness of decision, and a promptness of action, that precluded his sooner apprizing his father of a resolution he felt himself bound by sentiment, morality, and religion, to persist in without parental licence. Unwilling, however, to act in direct opposition to a father's commands, he had forborne to ask consent, whilst he respectfully solicited parental approbation, which he would have thought a duty incumbent even in a son independent of his parent. As this was not his case, and the

difficulty of his position required delicate management, he had taken infinite care in his letter to guard against every possible danger ; and therefore, in order to spare all parties concerned in the event, he had avoided explicit terms without incurring the reproach of duplicity. To have declared his marriage, without the ceremony of previous advice of it, might have appeared too daring to his father ever to be forgiven ; it became necessary, therefore, to apprize his parent of his wish of introducing a daughter-in-law to him, to shield his bride against the probability of a coarse reception : which would equally have wounded her delicacy, and have destroyed the hope he had flattered himself with, that a mutual approbation between his parent and bride might cement his family in domestic union, on the introduction of his charming Violante to his father's knowledge.

“ Much as my father had reason to fear the severity of his parent, he had too benevolent a heart to conceive the possibility of moroseness extinguishing totally every spark of that feeling he thought every man must possess, in some degree, for the virtuous part of the soft sex, of whom they ought to be the protectors. He had always revered his father as a good, though a harsh character ; but now saw he had vainly

flattered himself with the expectation of being able to interest him in favour of the lovely Donna Violante. Considering himself bound by every tie to guard her happiness, and to watch over her welfare, he now found it could only be effected by keeping his marriage a secret, not only from the parent, on whose good-will he was entirely dependant in pecuniary affairs, but also from the world ; in which their connections were too numerous, to admit the possibility of his union with Donna Violante escaping the knowledge of his father, if it were declared, even to a few friends, amongst a wide circle of intimate acquaintance.

“ How to conceal or reveal the predicament in which he stood, equally perplexed my father, whose delicacy of sentiment comprehended the effect that would be produced on the refined sensibility of Donna Violante, by the intelligence he had received.

“ She was, on her part, too anxious for the arrival of the expected letter from his father to remain ignorant of its receipt ; and all her feelings were too warmly interested in its contents, to admit of her refraining from enquiries, that must investigate the true state of every thing

relative to herself, however delicately it might be disclosed to her, that her father-in-law's blessing would never sanction the union she had formed.

“ Mortified at the idea of having entered a family unwilling to receive her, and distressed at the discovery that her connection with my father could never be revealed without exposing him to innumerable pecuniary difficulties ; as he had been obliged to confess himself entirely dependant on the parent who threatened, and had the power to disinherit him for the step he had taken, Donna Violante adopted the resolution of secluding herself, for life, in some convent in Portugal ; where, by assuming the veil, she should unloose the half-formed bonds that had united her to her lover. ‘ Your delicacy,’ said she to him, ‘ has fortunately left me this power ; your noble conduct has freed me from the paternal tyranny that would have denied me the resource of religious vows ; when I have once taken them they will annul those I have made to you, leave you at liberty to form a more propitious marriage, and deprive my father of all right over me in future. My sister, from her childhood, destined to a monastic life, will be happy to take the religious habit with me ; and associated together in devotional exercises, we shall ever pray fervently for our

generously gallant liberator; who will have conferred on us both the greatest obligations, by uniting two sisters in an asylum of temporal uninterrupted peace; where by constant intercession at the throne of grace they may be so happy as to obtain a father's pardon, and effect his salvation, with their own, by meriting a parent's benediction instead of his malediction.'

"It is but sophistical reasoning, my beloved *Violaute*," replied my father, 'to imagine sacred vows can be annulled. Our faith, reciprocally plighted at the holy altar, binds us mutually for life to the performance of oaths recorded in Heaven, whose blessings can only be obtained by the strict observance of those respective duties we have solemnly vowed to fulfil. Would you, by perjury to me, believe you were performing religious obligations?'

"*Donna Violaute* wept, and my father continued: 'No, my beloved, you could not be so cruel, even were you free, which is not the case, to leave me to mourn during a long life of hopeless despair, that I had fixed my affections irrevocably, and bestowed my hand on a woman too faithless to guard the happiness of

all my days, which I had, in the confidence of my soul, entrusted to her care.'

" You have convinced me,' cried Donna Violante, ' that we can never repair an imprudence by the commission of greater errors. I must submit to the penalty I have incurred, in encouraging you and myself in a passion which can never be productive of true happiness, since our union has been formed against the will of our parents.'

" My father endeavoured to console his bride, whilst he endured a thousand agonizing alarms on her account. It was now requisite that he should obey, as soon as possible, the summons that recalled him to his paternal home; and in hourly expectation of Dorothea's joining their little party, every thing was prepared for their leaving the retreat, in which the lovers had experienced, in a short time, a succession of happiness and misery.

" Impatient at the unexpected delay of her sister's promised arrival, Donna Violante suffered much uneasiness both on Dorothea's account and her husband's detention; and whilst in tears one morning, which flowed frequently on the several

subjects of her affliction, my father received a letter from Madrid. The superscription of Donna Isabella's hand gave her niece much alarm. She expected disastrous intelligence about Dorothea ; but of all the possible misfortunes anticipated by an anxious mind, Donna Violante least expected to hear that her sister was no more, which was the melancholy news briefly imparted by her aunt, with a consolatory reflection on the subject of Dorothea's removal from this world of sorrow to regions of eternal joy, that her virtues fitted her to enter.

“ To dispel the grief this shock occasioned, my father hastened his journey homeward.

“ In a short time he bound his fate to Donna Violante's, according to the modes and ceremonies of his country, to make her so legitimately his wife as to preclude the possibility of his marriage being called in dispute, as solemnized abroad, if at any future time it might be requisite to prove its validity.

“ His next care was to settle Donna Violante and Senora Leonora in an agreeable retirement, where he might leave them in safety whilst he visited his father. The promptness with which

the paternal summons was obeyed, persuaded the old gentleman that his commands had been attended to in a manner very contrary to his expectations ; and, pleased with the idea that his son relinquished all thoughts of forming a foreign alliance, the subject of his attachment was as carefully avoided by the father as by the son ; who was soon happily relieved from the anxiety he had suffered, lest an interview with his parent might oblige him to compromise honour, either by an infringement of sacred truth, or by the sacrifice of Violante's interest to veracity.

“ My father, with the approbation of his, now entered on the profession of arms ; choosing that line in life as equally suitable to his rank in society, and to his inclinations, because it was an honourable calling, and would, by his removal from the paternal residence, admit of occasional visits to his adored Violante. To join her, he in a short time flew on the wings of love to the place of her retreat.

“ The delicacy of principle which had made her leave behind her the costly jewels provided by her father and Don Sebastian, to render her bridal pomp suitable to their grandeur, gave her no regret, except that of being an unportioned wife

to a man deserving of more wealth, in her opinion, than the rich dower the duke might have bestowed on him. The generosity of her soul rejoiced, however, that her kind aunt's munificence had afforded her the means of lessening, in some measure, the expence at which she must be maintained in a residence separated from her husband's establishment. The sale of some valuable gifts presented to her by Donna Isabella, enabled Donna Violante to purchase the elegant cottage which was her retreat from the world circumstances rendered it requisite she should relinquish. In that charming retirement she lived, occasionally blessed by the visits of a husband; whose refinement of sentiment made him so attentive to the delicacy of her sensibility, and the purity of her reputation, that he never was seen in the family but as a visitor; and, by the utmost decorum of conduct, could never have been suspected, even by his own domestics, of any connection with Donna Violante, except that which old acquaintance and the most delicate friendship authorized. Whenever absence from professional duty admitted of his seeing the object of his affection, he took a temporary residence in the vicinity of Donna Violante's retreat. The country in which it was situated afforded much amusement to the sportsman, and as he always came in that

character, it accounted, to the few inhabitants of the place, for his frequenting it. The retired and romantic situation of the cottage had recommended it to Donna Violante as an equally delightful and secure asylum. She was only known in the neighbouring hamlet as a lady of extraordinary benevolence ; for acts of charity were the sole intercourse she had with any one out of her own small family. To have acknowledged himself the husband of Donna Violante, even in that small and retired neighbourhood, where his connections were unknown, might have been attended with dangerous consequences ; it, therefore, became requisite for him to associate secretly with his wife, lest two frequent visits should raise suspicions injurious to his honour and the delicacy of Donna Violante.

“ About five years after their union, an expected increase of family added to their care, and yet promised an augmentation of their happiness. On this occasion it became necessary that Donna Violante should leave her residence for a time, in order to escape her character being traduced by the tongue of slander.

“ At this period my father secretly joined her ; and, under an assumed name, accompanied his

lady and Senora Leonora, in a journey to a neighbouring country, where I was given to their care. Shortly after my birth, my father's military services were required ; and commanded on duty to a foreign land, he felt, as a soldier, that it was impossible to refuse the aid of his sword in the defence of his sovereign's rights, although, as a husband and a father, he lamented the necessity that called him from an adored wife and an infant tenderly beloved. The maternal bosom which then nurtured me was agonized at the idea of her only hope and support being torn from her arms to attend the standard of danger ; but recollecting that he was summoned to the post of duty, she acquiesced in the necessity of his departure, and mourned its approach with firm submission.

“ As my father's absence from his country might be long, my mother thought it would be eligible to remain abroad until his return.

“ The misery of my parents' separation was rendered extreme by the reflection, that the fortune of war might widow my mother, and leaving her helpless and forlorn, throw her on the world's mercy with a child unacknowledged by its progenitors, and a burthen on her ; as she was unprovided with the means of maintaining

either herself, or educating her infant in the station to which high birth entitled it. My father, however, on his departure, somewhat tranquillized the anguish of his mind by performing an act of filial and parental duty. In the affliction of his soul, he wrote an address, superscribed to his father, informing him of his marriage, with the strong reason that urged him to it, without requesting paternal licence ; and, soliciting pardon for the offence committed against a father's authority, assured him, that the wish of sparing his parent uneasiness, of retaining his favour, and performing the sacred obligations of a husband, had compelled him to conceal his union, since it was displeasing to his father ; concluding, by deprecating his anger, and by solemnly adjuring him to protect the wife and child whom the fortune of war might leave widowed and fatherless, and whom the last wishes of a dying son bequeathed to the care of a respected father.

“ Having delivered this address to Donna Violante as the only will his limited powers admitted of his making, my father tore himself from his weeping wife, and left her to mourn over me, whom she pressed to her bosom as the living portrait of her husband ; and uniting her prayers with his, that necessity might never compel her to

become the suppliant petitioner of a parent whom even a son's last request might fail in moving to compassionate the widowed mother of his unprovided grandchild. The annual allowance my father had from his, with the small emoluments of his profession, in which he was obliged to sustain the dignity of an officer, and an appearance suitable to a gentleman of high birth and noble connections, had been insufficient to enable him to realize even a trifle from an income barely adequate to his own expences, and the establishment of Donna Violante. Their joint economy was requisite to render their revenue equal to the necessary demands upon it. Even this scanty provision, always precarious, as depending entirely on my father's life, became doubly uncertain, by the active part duty obliged him to take in scenes of martial perils. The small cottage my mother had inhabited was the sole possession she could feel assured of retaining. That elegant little retreat, with the grounds adjacent, she let at an advantageous rent; whilst in the cheaper country to which she removed at my birth, she lived in such strict economy as enabled her to spare my father making many retrenchments from the necessary expences of his situation, although he would joyfully have sacrificed all his comforts for her ease.

“ To relate the miseries of anxious suspense each endured during two years of tedious absence, might be, perhaps, impossible, and would undoubtedly make a tiresome tale,” said Seraphina, smiling sweetly through tears of filial gratitude and tenderness, which the history of her parents had suffused in lustrous beauty in her beaming eyes. The gentle Erina’s glistened, also, with a sympathy that proved she had taken the liveliest interest in Seraphina’s narrative; and, pressing her hand, she looked a supplication for its continuation; whilst a smiling bow from Rosaline and Agnes the nun, testified attention and expectation; when Seraphina resumed her story in the following manner:—

“ My father returned at the end of two years to his native land, crowned with military fame; and, after a filial obeisance, flew, on the wings of ardent affection, to lay his laurels at my mother’s feet. Conducted once more by her husband to his country, she again settled herself in her charming retreat, where she lived, as formerly, with an elegance which was the result of economy.

“ The few new domestics that composed our small household could not guess me to be the

child of Donna Violante, since I was not acknowledged by her as such, and had been kept in total ignorance of any affinity to her. On her return to the cottage, the neighbourhood, who knew nothing of her but that she was a foreigner, believing she had visited her native kingdom, and that she was either a single or widowed lady, imagined me to be the child of some relation or friend, whom she had been charged with the care of, or had adopted. To have entrusted me in my childhood with the knowledge of my real circumstances, so dangerous to be revealed to any one, would have been imprudent in the extreme ; and it was judged best, on every account, by my parents, not to disclose to me, even in my riper years, secrets relative to my birth and situation, which could only have tended to disturb the peaceful pleasures of youth with innumerable useless anxieties, and to have occasioned numberless unnecessary cares and prudential reserves unnatural to the happy unconcern, and prejudicial to the candour and frankness of ingenuous youth. Of my affection and duty my parents were sufficiently ensured, by my constant residence under the superintendence of a mother's and a father's eye. Continually guided by the care and tuition of Donna Violante, whom I loved as a protector, and revered as a

mother, knowing no other, I likewise imbibed a filial affection for my father, whilst I considered him as a friend. The human mind, especially in early years, is inclined to cherish with ardour the first impression of tender feeling; and the attachments of the heart will always be strong, even towards objects unconnected with us, should we be situated so as not to know the bonds of consanguinity.

“ Whilst maternal instruction unfolded the faculties of my soul, my father’s occasional visits afforded him an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the child he dared not acknowledge; and whilst the tenderest parental care watched over my present happiness and future advantage, solicitude for it induced both my father and mother to sacrifice their feelings to mine, in forbearing to acquaint me with the painful circumstances of my precarious and, in their opinion, melancholy situation; generously preferring to relinquish their strong claims to my filial gratitude and reverence, rather than discover their title to it at the expence of my peace.

“ When my father had disclosed to me the particulars of his history,” continued Seraphina, “ he took my hand with paternal tenderness, and ad-

dressed me in these words : ‘ My dear girl is now fully acquainted with every thing relative to her birth and situation, which having requested her mother carefully to conceal from her, she had not the power of revealing apparent mysteries, connected with herself and her child, without my consent.

“ Learn now, my beloved Seraphina, how dear you are to the heart of your parents, whose only uneasiness arises from an anticipation of the difficulties their union may entail on a daughter, whose claims to splendour and affluence may never be acknowledged by either of the noble families from which she is descended. Allied to persons of the highest rank, born to great possessions, it may be your destiny, my Seraphina, in outliving your father, to heir nothing but his poor blessing ; it may be the fate of my wife and child to stand indebted to strangers for support and protection : and, oh ! my daughter, should you survive both the authors of your being, it distracts me to think of the distress to which your innocence may be exposed in an evil and a miserable world !”

“ My father was so deeply affected, that his articulation failed ; and my mother, in the solemn pause

of affliction, wept in a manner that agonized me into silence ; but seizing the hands of my parents, I pressed them repeatedly to my bursting heart, whilst I endeavoured to express by my looks, that the delight I felt in being acknowledged by them overpaid every privation to which I might be doomed.

“ Tell me, my Seraphina, my child,” cried my mother, “ that I am justified in your opinion, for remember that my temptation to imprudence was powerful. From the tyranny of a cruel father I was bestowed, by the representative of a beloved and sainted mother, on a lover too amiable to be denied the honourable suit he pressed ; but, alas ! how fatal have I been to the peace of an adoring husband !”

“ Say not so, my love !” tenderly interrupted my father ; “ you have been my consolation, my joy ! Oh ! my Violante, your perfections, your affection, merited all that the world could bestow on beauty, constancy, and superior virtue. Your union with me, alas ! has doomed you to pine and wither in obscurity ; for me you have sacrificed riches, magnificence, and the enjoyments of a splendid world, to mourn in narrow circumstances, spend a life deprived of pleasure, and lament,

with me, the situation of our hapless child. But say, my Seraphina,' continued my father, addressing me, 'that you will alleviate our sufferings by entering the world.'

"Command your child, my father,' I cried,—
'I live but to obey and make you happy.'

"It was my wish,' he rejoined, 'to have introduced you into life in happy ignorance of the painful and precarious situation in which you must be fated to remain, perhaps, for many years. To acknowledge you as my child, the legitimate offspring of my marriage with your mother, during your grandfather's life, would be to expose you, myself, and her, who is dearer to me than existence, to my father's cruellest severity, and to immediate and inevitable distress of the most mortifying kind. It is, therefore, requisite I should warn you against the least disclosure that may lead to the discovery of your real name; under an assumed one you will be introduced into the world, where you may pass the remainder of your days as a young foreign lady of distinction. This story the place of your nativity renders true; but your affinity to me, and your having been from infancy a resident in this country, must be concealed. Your mother's name, and her living in

this kingdom, must also remain impenetrable secrets to every one you may meet in the circle where you are to move, as there are several persons, to whom you may hereafter be known, who were formerly intimate with the charming and celebrated Donna Violante; and, remembering my admiration of the beautiful Spaniard, might draw conclusions pertinent to a story that made too much noise to be already forgotten. Our ambassador resident at the court of Spain when I was introduced there, on his return to this country, told me, my assassination had been a great theme at Madrid; where the sudden disappearance of the intended bride of Don Sebastian, the day previous to that fixed for the nuptial ceremony, and my flight at the same time, had awakened a general suspicion that the jealous Spaniard had found me too fortunate a rival; and the ambassador added, that seeing me in my native country a single man could alone have destroyed the opinion he had for some time entertained of my having eloped with the duke's daughter. You see, therefore, my dear Seraphina,' continued my father, 'the cause for much caution to shun the misfortunes I have so greatly dreaded. The friend to whom I am about to entrust you is the only confidant of my clandestine marriage: an intimacy from youth, cemented by consan-

guinity, will ensure you the friendship and protection of a relation anxious to receive you as such, and to promote your happiness and welfare.

“ At the conclusion of my father’s address. I had attained sufficient composure to speak the sentiments which til then had struggled in vain for utterance. ‘ Beloved, revered, and tenderest of parents,’ I cried, pressing their united hands to my lips, ‘ your sufferings for each other, and for me, endear you both inexpressibly to my heart, which, impressed indelibly with your virtues and my obligations, conceives no wish but that of devoting myself to the imitation of your excellencies, and the most earnest endeavours to afford you, by the highest filial gratitude and sense of duty, all the felicity a child can give. To remain the constant companion of a loved mother’s solitude and seclusion would be my delight, were I not sensible that a daughter’s first duty is perfect submission to the desire of indulgent parents. Your wishes I shall even obey as commands; and though the gay world can never offer me the joys I experience in this sweet retirement, whilst blessed with your society, I am ready to yield up my highest enjoyment to procure you the peace you lose on my account, and which

I would gladly purchase for you, even at the sacrifice of my life.'

" In compliance with the entreaties of my father and mother I entered the gay scenes of busy life, regretting the peacefully delightful retreat of my childhood. The pleasures of the world were insufficient to dispel the melancholy sensations that agonized my soul when I embraced my loved mother, with the sad apprehension that I was leaving her never more to be encircled in the maternal embrace.

" The kind and amiable friend, who received me with a parent's regard, was my only consolation in a grief my father's visits seldom cheered. When I saw him, the presence of strangers, and the fear of discovering my affinity to him, checked the effusions of my filial affection, and made me feel like an unconnected and unhappy being, deprived of all the joys sentiment alone can afford. The sensibility of my soul seemed an avenue to misery, ever intruding in innumerable shapes, to wound and annihilate my peace. My mind keenly susceptible, timid by nature, and apprehensive from my situation, I believed I saw a spy in every associate; and each eye, fixed on me as a stranger, appeared observant of my every

action, and ready to seize an occasion of wresting from me a secret by which the authors of my existence would be ruined. Continually tormented by the dread of betraying to misery the kind father and tender mother, who had already endured so much on my account, I was a stranger to repose.

“ One evening, at a public entertainment, chance threw me into the society of my unknown grandfather: unacquainted with his person, the austerity of his looks repulsed me while he fixed many enquiring regards on me. Having understood I was a foreigner, he addressed me by a number of questions, which I was at much difficulty to answer, without compromising either my truth or honour. The idea of my father's danger, of my mother's safety, and that my secrecy must be the guardian of my parent's welfare and happiness, set a watch upon my lips, and even put a constraint on my looks, lest they might be the interpreter of my thoughts. My terror and anxiety increased at every new demand, and petrified me with consternation, when my unknown questioner, introducing himself to me by name, asked me if I was acquainted with the Spanish noble family from which I was descended; telling me, his son had formerly been at Madrid, and had, he feared, left his heart in the possession of a beautiful

lady of that house : and concluded this distressing speech by enquiring if I had ever heard any particulars of that affair mentioned at Madrid.

“ The mention of my father’s name, the reference to his story, the interrogations respecting my knowledge of him and my mother’s family, thus abruptly put to me by the person whom, of all others, I most dreaded, threw me into a surprise and tremor which I was terribly apprehensive must inevitably betray the secret I had been entrusted to keep with the utmost care. Equally shocked and confused, I was silenced for an instant by emotion ; but urged to exertion by a motive sufficiently powerful to overcome the perturbation excited by extreme terror, I summoned strength of resolution enough to compose my agitated frame and mind, and replied with an apparent ease, assumed with difficulty, that my youth had kept me until then in so much seclusion as to prevent my being acquainted with many people, except by name ; and that the person respecting whom he had enquired, was known to me merely by character, as I never had seen the duke.

“ My grandfather then demanded how long I

purposed to honour that kingdom with my presence ; to which I replied, as if by inspiration of some guardian angel, that it was my wish and intention to take a religious habit, and that, if I received the permission of my friends, I should, in a short time, assume the veil, as I had not the happiness of having either a father's or a mother's introduction into society. This reply, though not a direct answer to the question which had extremely perplexed me, was not a mere subterfuge to evade investigation of my situation ; the unhappiness attended on it, occasioned by the awkwardness of continual concealment, whilst every person in all the companies I frequented was ever inquisitive about all circumstances relative to me, and the hazard I ran of betraying, by some inadvertent imprudence, the interests and tranquillity of parents who had been so tenderly mindful of mine, had frequently excited a desire in me to retire for ever from a world which presented nothing but uneasiness at the present period, and that might, at some future time, have nothing in store for the remainder of my days but difficulties increased, and misery augmented beyond what conception could anticipate. I had often seriously reflected on the eligibility of my retiring to some monastic seclusion, where I might live unknown by any human being ; and where, by

taking religious vows, I might acquire peace, and set my parents' hearts at ease respecting my future destiny, which no mortal could then have power to trouble or render unfortunate. The idea of a convent's calm retreat had frequently soothed my agitated soul to pious serenity, in the contemplation, that on my assuming the veil I should bid adieu to all the sorrows that assault those who stem the perturbed tide of busy life; and that should it please Heaven to leave my mother destitute of fortune and a husband's protection, she might retire to the arms of a daughter, who would fulfil her filial duty and obligation, by repaying the maternal cares that had sustained her infancy, in attending and consoling a mother in her declining years. This thought was delightful to me, and particularly consolatory, when the encounter and examination of my grandfather proved the extreme probability of the discovery of my important secret; and not only suggested, but confirmed me in the opinion, that I had conceived the best, perhaps the only means of security against the peril so much apprehended, and which had already approached so near.

“ Weary of a state of continual dread, miserable for fear of being discovered, and almost equally unhappy from the reflection, that I was a

species of impostor on the public by the cruel necessity of relinquishing my real for a false name, and feeling conscious of tacit hypocrisy in appearing other than I was, I resolved to fulfil, as soon as possible, the intentions I had conceived, and then mentioned to my grandfather. The scrutinizing regards he fixed on me, added to the extraordinary interrogations he put to me, made me tremble at the idea, that something more than common curiosity had instigated his examination of my person, and his enquiries relative to my situation; and, therefore, I endeavoured to parry any suspicions he might have conceived respecting me, by shunning investigation, and misleading his opinion, although I should have been incapable of avoiding the greatest danger of misfortune by a direct falsehood.

“ Disquieted more than usual by the interview with my grandfather, and apprehensive of again meeting him, as he was known in the societies I frequented, I took the earliest opportunity of apprizing my parents with my adventure; earnestly soliciting their permission to retire to some convent. I urged this request for two reasons equally cogent, namely, my strong predilection for a monastic life, and the necessity I felt myself engaged by to fulfil intentions, obligatory as they

were moral; for persuaded as I was of the propriety of my assuming the veil, for the causes that had inspired the wish: an additional reason also for my retiring to a nunnery, suggested itself in the idea that, if any suspicion of my affinity to my grandfather had been awakened in his mind, he would most assuredly be too observant of my motions to admit of my remaining in the world, or retiring from it, without being so strictly watched as to render it impossible for him to remain ignorant of my destination; and that, consequently, no place but a convent could afford me an asylum secure against the probability of a discovery that would undo us all; since either my remaining in the busy world, or retiring to my mother's retreat, would hazard my connection with my parents being traced, and must, in that case, necessarily disclose a tale destructive to us all.

“ My arguments appeared so conclusive to both my parents, and they were so anxious for my happiness and welfare, that they found it impossible to resist my entreaties: acceding, therefore, to my earnest solicitations, they permitted me to retire to this seclusion, on condition that I would not precipitately decide on assuming the veil, nor take religious vows without

parental consent. My promise on that subject I consider sacred as an oath; but although the religious habit has not bound me to this abode for life, I hold myself obliged, by filial duty, to consecrate the remainder of my days to the pious care of a father's interest and a mother's peace; which, in present circumstances, can only be ensured by my total seclusion within these walls. This hallowed place, its sacred cloisters, and holy altars, afforded me a sanctified retreat from worldly cares about my future fate; but my heart, even amidst these sacred cells of spiritual contemplation, laments, in spite of duty, which forbids regret, my separation from ties of consanguinity death can alone dissolve. The sainted shrines, before whose blessed relics I bend in fervent supplication for mercies on my parents at times of devotion, tranquillize my soul with the sweet consciousness of right intention in the painful sacrifices I have made of joys relinquished, perhaps, for ever; and friendship's voice," said Seraphina in softened accents, as she gracefully bowed to Lady Kinross, Erina, and the nun, "aids religion in reconciling me to an abode, the gloom of which is ill calculated to raise my spirits, depressed as they of late have been by numberless anxieties, shocks, and terrors of woes worse than death: for to follow my parents to the

tomb, in the expectation of soon reposing my sorrows in the grave, and rising with their blessed spirits to cloudless regions of eternity, would be joy compared to the mental anguish of beholding the authors of my days in misery, and seeing them live to hourly suffering, whilst mourning my fate more than their own.

“ May Heaven avert from them the evils impending over my father’s head while life is spared to him! and, though I cannot love my grandsire,” continued Seraphina, in touching tones, “ since, instead of opening his paternal arms to receive me as his offspring, and bestowing a blessing on his grandchild, for her father’s sake, I should be spurned from his presence as an intruding stranger; yet nature acknowledges in my heart the laws of consanguinity, and my soul bends obedient to that divine command, which enjoins the homage of filial honour to every parent; and in my morning and evening prayers, I pray with fervour that Providence, amongst other mercies, would confer on my grandfather that of preserving him from the sin of parental cruelty to a son, who has paid him the most dutiful reverence and submission through innumerable severe trials.”

“ Charming, amiable Seraphina!” ejaculated

Erina, whilst enthusiastic admiration sparkled in her eyes, and the smile of affection softened her exquisite beauty into the most celestial expression of angelic benevolence,—“my sweet friend!” continued Erina, energetically, “meriting the blessing of Heaven is sure of obtaining it. Yes, you, my dear Seraphina, with your estimable parents, must be happy, since virtue and excellence of character are ever the peculiar care of Providence.

“Let a reliance on that, my dear Seraphina,” added Rosaline, sweetly smiling a look of tender consolation, “cheer and sustain your drooping spirits: to despond in affliction is not to trust, as a christian ought, in that Divine protection which ever attends on suffering innocence. Seraphina is too perfect to fail in the performance of any moral or religious duty, since both her heart and reason are so particularly under the influence of piety.”

Agnes, in a gentle voice and soothing manner, entreated Seraphina’s observance of Lady Kinross’s precepts, assuring the two friends, that the teacher and scholar were worthy of each other.

Rosaline and Seraphina smiled an acknowledgment of the nun’s compliment; and the midnight

bell then summoning the sisterhood to their devotions, Agnes rose to join them in the chapel, thanking Seraphina for the recital of a touching tale, to which the graces of her manner had given a thousand charms. A courteous inclination of Seraphina's, exquisitely proportioned form gave united sweetness and dignity to her deportment, while she thanked sister Agnes for the interest with which she had listened to her story, that she was apprehensive would have been too tedious. " In the narration of the few events of my tale," continued Seraphina, " I fear I have been induced to a wearisome prolixity, from a desire to pourtray minutely the character of my generous father and amiable mother, on whose excellencies I love to dwell. By my tender affection for them; by the sufferings they have endured for each other and for me; and by the filial duty I owe them, let me conjure you, my friends," solemnly enjoined Seraphina, whilst every lineament of her beautifully expressive countenance, and each action of her fine form, impressed the deep sentiments of awe,—“ let me conjure you all, and each,” she repeated in a grave commanding tone, “ to respect the confidence I have placed in your virtue; and let me entreat you, my dear Lady Kinross, my beloved Erina, and valued Agnes, never to

disclose to mortal ears one circumstance relating to me; for, notwithstanding the concealment of my name and country, I might be discovered by the peculiarity of my story; which I have narrated to you, in order to unfold that, although enveloped in an apparent mysterious reserve, and evidently the victim of misfortune, I have no crimes to conceal, nor any shame to hide; and that I am as innocent as I appear unhappy; and, consequently, my friends, not unworthy of the esteem and affection each of you have honoured me by professing. My tenderest friendship, and all the confidence in my power to grant, I offer in return for your's."

At the conclusion of Seraphina's address to her three friends, she embraced them each with the most touching expression of noble sentiment, which is the characteristic of a highly exalted soul, equally energetic in its feelings, as it is delicately refined in its acute sensibility.

The congenial minds of Rosaline and Erina seized her sensations by the keen susceptibility of hearts ever alive to sympathy, and each encircling Seraphina in their arms, impressed on her cheek a kiss that sealed the vow of fidelity taken by

friendship, which pledged its strictest honour, never to divulge the secrets Seraphina's confidence had reposed in its bosom ; and the nun, kissing her rosary, swore by the sacred sign of the cross pendant at her breast, eternal fidelity.

The last stroke of the chapel bell now hurried the party to their midnight devotions ; and as Seraphina passed through the cloisters, supported by the encircling arms of Rosaline and Erina, the latter, silently pondering on the history of her sorrowful friend, drew from it this moral, that *although parents have no right to tyrannize over the inclinations or persons of their children, yet disobedience to the commands, or even the omission of compliance with the desires of the cruellest father or mother, entails unhappiness on an offspring.*

CHAP. VIII.

"The value of wealth consists alone in the power of munificent acts, and in the consciousness of employing the affluence with which Heaven entrusts us, in deeds of self-denial, to bless others ; which is the highest enjoyment riches can afford."

THE confidence Seraphina had reposed in Rosaline and Erina, although but partial, had fully convinced the two amiable girls of her reliance on them, and thus increased that attachment they had at first sight of her been inspired with, and which a further acquaintance cemented by a better knowledge of those virtuous principles and admirable dispositions her story ascertained to be the constituent part of her equally exalted and energetic character. Seraphina, on her side, felt herself more entitled to the affection her

friends had professed towards her, since she had admitted them into all the confidence with which circumstances permitted her repaying their ardent friendship. She was conscious of a pure and noble mind, valued herself on the firm rectitude of her principles, rejoiced in the undeviating innocence of her actions, and experienced pleasure in her dignified descent, without possessing one sentiment approaching to arrogance or conceit; for her soul was too great to harbour any feeling that was not truly so: the delicacy of her taste led her to delight in elegance, and the satisfaction an honourable situation afforded her proceeded from refinement instead of pride, as her wish to appear amiable originated not in vanity, but was the result of her reverence and love of virtue, and an opinion that every individual was obliged by religion to evince in their example a rigid observance of moral duties ennobled by the firmest foundation of piety.

The congeniality of taste, sentiment, and character, which bound Rosaline, Erina, and Seraphina in the strongest alliance of friendship, rendered them almost inseparable; and Lady Kinross's saloon, by her entreaty, became the daily and constant resort of Seraphina; who, with her two lovely associates, devoted to the cultivation

of the ornamental arts, and the pursuit of intellectual improvement, those hours unclaimed by the more important duties of religious exercises.

Music, vocal and instrumental, designing and painting, in all the different efforts of the pencil, and the sprightly mazes of the sportive dance, engaged the friends every evening in the most innocent and elegant amusement, ever varied and ever delightful; meanwhile the summer advanced. One evening towards the end of that charming season, when the sun, retaining all its splendour, and shining with mild effulgence through clear autumnal air, shot his brilliant beams into the apartment of Lady Kinross, and, illumining it with nature's brightest light, enlivened the saloon, the three friends assembled as usual; and, like the sister graces heathen fables sing, stood to enjoy the refreshing breeze at the open window, while their arms entwined each other in friendship's link. Erina, the favourite of her loved Rosaline and Seraphina, placed between them, clasped them each to her bosom, and embraced by both, seemed like the chain that bound them mutually.

The animated soul of Erina sparkled in her

eyes whilst she endeavoured to call the smile of pleasure into the pensive countenance of Seraphina, which the lively conversation of Rosaline had failed to effect; for Seraphina had been anticipating the speedily approaching departure of her two friends, and tears of sorrow hung on her eyelashes, like gems of dazzling lustre tremblingly pendant in radiant sun-beams, at the painful idea, that a few short weeks would terminate the stay of Lady Kinross and her charming companion at the convent. Seraphina knew of their intended departure in the autumn, and as she marked its approach in the decay of the summer flowers, she sighed heavily at the reflection, that her present pleasure, short lived as the roses' bloom now withering under her eye in the convent garden, would, like them, fade at the chill breath of coming winter, and leave her drooping midst increasing gloom.

At the moment most oppressed by the idea of the dreadful void Rosaline's and Erina's absence would occasion in her dull abode, Seraphina reclined her head on the shoulder of Erina; and as Rosaline kissed away a tear that stood empearled upon the beauteous cheeks of the disconsolate girl, the saloon door was thrown wide open, and,

in a party of advancing visitors, Lady Kinross and Erina recognized Sir Phelim Fitz-Henry, Mrs. O'Brien, and her son!

Having undertaken their excursion to Paris some weeks sooner than had been proposed, the worthy baronet and his fellow travellers pleased themselves on their journey with the idea of surprising Erina most agreeably by their unexpected arrival; and, therefore, forbore apprizing her of it. Transfixed, for an instant, with astonishment, at the sudden appearance of her loved family, Erina stood gazing at her grand-sire, mother, and brother, as if to assure herself of the reality of the delightful vision; then, impelled by affection and winged with joy, she sprang forward and precipitated herself into the extendend arms of her parents. Pressed successively to the breast of Sir Phelim and her mother, Erina ejaculated a thousand tender enquiries; and hastily flew to the fraternal embrace, to welcome, with enthusiastic affection, a brother who evinced the fondest transport whilst pressing her to his bosom.

Lady Kinross, overjoyed by the presence of friends most highly esteemed, after interchanging salutations with the baronet and Mrs.

O'Brien, advanced, with easy grace, to return the respectfully familiar greetings of Charles, welcoming him with a smile of extreme pleasure. Seizing her yielding hand with the most delicate intimacy, the polite youth pressed it with a chaste sensation of friendship, animated as his character was enthusiastic; then bowing on the passive hand of the fair Rosaline, he relinquished it with inimitable elegance, whilst his graceful movements, and expressive countenance, declared his courtesy to be equally the result of refined sentiment and courtly polish.

Erina looked at her brother with a fond sister's exultation as she marked improvement in his figure, air, and features, which she had believed perfect. His person, that from boyhood had been admirable, had now attained all the manly symmetry that distinguishes the Belvedere Apollo: in addition to the exquisite proportions of a faultless form, his deportment, ever graceful, united to the finished elegance of a complete gentleman, that martial demeanour that always adorns a soldier's carriage; and the military spirit of his air was admirably suited to his features, over which animation, blended with sweetness, ever played in varying expression. The ruddy tint of health glowed in his manly face; his

eyes, beaming with joy, irradiated his countenance with all the emanations of a soul alive to every sentiment that can exalt human nature.

Warm in his admiration of female elegance and beauty, that of Seraphina attracted his gaze, and he rivetted his eyes on her exquisite form as she stood with her face averted from his eager glances. Her's had already informed her of his enquiring regards, and, anxious to shun the scrutiny of his looks, her virgin timidity prompted her to fly them: with down-cast eyes and blushing modesty, she moved forward towards the door, purposing, and hoping to avoid the examination of visitors by whom she wished not to be seen.

Erina, who saw nothing in Seraphina's intention of withdrawing but a design to avoid the appearance of intrusion on strangers, whose visit had not been intended to her, was impelled by a sentiment of delicacy to detain the friend she felt most happy in introducing to her family under the sacred title of tender amity; and, seizing the hand of Seraphina as she passed with averted eyes, she presented her to her family as a beloved friend; and as the deeply blushing girl bent in dignified salutation to the courteous addresses of Sir Pehlim, Mrs. O'Brien, and the handsome

youth, the latter advanced towards Seraphina, equally surprised and delighted to behold in her the beautiful unknown; whose exquisite features and matchless form, engraven on his heart, could not have escaped immediate recognition, had she not, with extreme care, endeavoured to conceal her face from the view of a person recollected with emotion; and who she flattered herself would not know her, as a change of dress might, she imagined, have made too great an alteration in her appearance to admit the discovery of her person. Seraphina was, however, greatly mistaken in the idea, that there was a possibility of remaining disguised to the piercing glances of a youth, whose imagination had, for several months, been occupied with the lively representation of her charms; and whose enquiring gaze had been attracted towards her, and fixed on her, by the resemblance his heart found between her and its adored idol and standard of female perfection.

Not having dared to flatter himself that he should again be blessed with a passing view of the lovely incognita, he was now equally surprised and delighted to find her the companion and beloved friend of Erina; and readily admitted the enchanting idea, suggested by sanguine hope, that a sister's introduction would entitle him to

a consideration proportioned to that the charming maid must feel for Erina. The ecstasy this thought inspired, added lustre to his eyes, suffused a deeper glow over his fine expressive countenance, and gave increased grace to his mode of addressing the beautiful unknown ; whose manners, ever elegantly dignified and gracefully sentimental, evinced not that her sensibility was distressingly awakend by this introduction : for Seraphina's delicacy instantaneously suggested to her, that as the amiable Erina had not violated the faith of friendship in presenting her to her family, there would be gross impropriety in permitting her to see, that the introduction to her near relations, under the honourable and sacred title of a beloved friend, had given her any uneasiness. On the contrary, Seraphina endeavoured to express, in her looks, words, and air, how sensible she was of the flattering distinction Erina paid her ; and the beauty of Seraphina's face and form, the elegance of her language, and the innumerable graces that adorned her manners, had never appeared so admirable as at the moment of her addressing the relatives of Erina.

The worthy baronet's gallantry was called forth to its best exertions in his salutation of the lovely stranger ; and Mrs. O'Brien's courtesy had never

been more engaging than when she expressed the hope of being honoured very frequently with the company of Erina's friend during their stay in Paris. To this politely hospitable invitation Seraphina bowed a silent acknowledgment, while young O'Brien's looks spoke more than even his eloquence could have expressed.

Erina observed, from the manner of her brother's addressing her friend, and the mode of Seraphina's receiving the compliments of Charles, that they had met in London; and this circumstance ascertained to the perception of Erina, that her friend's residence must have been in England, and that consequently her paternal family were natives of that kingdom. This observation disclosed to the comprehensive mind of Erina, that Seraphina must be particularly anxious to have her history concealed from O'Brien. A confirmation of this she read in the expressive countenance of the deeply blushing girl; and in a look, whose meaning could not be mistaken, Erina assured Seraphina, that the important trust reposed in the bosom of friendship, should, by it, be preserved for ever inviolably.

The lady abbess of the convent being apprized of the arrival of Erina's family, made her en-

trance into the salloon, and, with much politeness, greeted the strangers, requesting their company in her apartments, where she treated them with all the courtesy imaginable; and might have induced them to lengthen their visit, had not the fatigue consequent to a long journey over the paved road from Calais to Paris, made the old baronet and Mrs. O'Brien anxious to retire early to repose.

On taking leave for the night, Mrs. O'Brien informed the superior that her permission would be solicited for Erina's absence from the convent on the following day; to which the lady abbess promised the most ready assent, adding many flattering encomiums on the conduct and talents of her charge and pupil, highly gratifying to the heart of a mother anxiously solicitous for the perfection of a beloved child.

The hours of the visit seemed short to all parties, and the society separated with regret on all sides.

As soon as Erina's family retired, the three friends repaired to Lady Kinross's saloon. An unusual dejection shaded the lovely countenance of Seraphina, rendering her more interesting than

ever to the amiable Rosaline and Erina; who were both so delicate as to avoid carefully the slightest allusion to the discovery each had made relative to Seraphina, more beloved, if possible, by her two friends, from their knowledge of her having a filial affinity to a Briton. This circumstance, added to her residence from infancy in England, made Rosaline and Erina consider Seraphina as their country-woman, and that title endeared her to them as a sister in a foreign kingdom, where they had for some time associated with a community of strangers, amongst whom they had felt themselves aliens.

Seraphina's sensibility rendered her heart fully susceptible of Rosaline's and Erina's exquisitely delicate conduct towards her; and she parted from them for the night tranquillized by a perfect conviction, that neither of her friends would betray her confidence, nor ever make use of the discovery of her residence in England to lead to any avowal inconsistent with her duty.

On the following morning Charles called by appointment, flattering himself he might have the pleasure of seeing the charming unknown: she, however, appeared not with Lady Kinross. After paying his compliments to her, he conducted

Erina to the hotel, where the baronet had taken a temporary lodging, until he could suit himself in better accommodations than were to be found at their first arrival in a metropolis where they were entire strangers. The family party now assembled, set out in search of an agreeable situation for their residence during their stay in Paris; and soon procured handsome apartments in an hotel on the Boulevards, to which Erina directed her grandfather as the most airy and cheerful place, and where they might be likely to find such lodgings as would be eligible. Sir Phelim having hired a suit of rooms for the reception of his family in the ensuing week, with his accustomed benevolence, and indulgent fondness for Erina, felt highly pleased at the idea, that his removal to a spacious set of apartments would afford her the delight of inviting Lady Kinross and her new friend to make part of his family during his stay at Paris, or at least for some weeks; as he had learned from Rosaline that she did not expect the return of the Vicountess de Briangon until the middle of autumn; and the amiable Sir Phelim had some reason to flatter himself, that her fair niece would, in the interval, consent to spend a little time in his family as the guest of Erina, from whom she would so soon be obliged to separate, perhaps for ever. The worthy baronet hoped also that a

similar consideration would induce the beautiful young stranger to become the inmate of her friend Erina's relations previous to their quitting Paris ; and he had agreed for a sufficient number of apartments to admit of an enlargement of family, in case his invitations were accepted. They had already been made with the politest hospitality, and Sir Phelim commissioned his granddaughter to enforce them with all the powers of friendship on her return to the convent at night, where she was to sleep until their removal to the new lodgings.

After a happy day passed in mutual endearments and the most exquisitely delightful domestic enjoyments, Erina went back to the nunnery to join her friends, and execute the commission of soliciting their abode with her for some time. Accompanied by her brother as an escort to the convent, she observed him unusually silent, and, with her accustomed gaiety, rallied him on being an uncommonly stupid companion. At the droll sallies of his lively sister on the subject of his dullness, Charles assumed a cheerfulness of manner uncongenial with his feelings, and which had all the air of an unnatural effort in him, who was too little conversant in the art of acting an assumed part to perform it well.

His mind, entirely absorbed by the idea of the lovely maiden still unknown, except as his sister's friend, was anxiously bent on the wish of learning as many particulars as possible concerning an object infinitely interesting to him. He had pondered all day on a mode of enquiry best calculated to satisfy his eager curiosity, without evincing it; and he was already near parting with Erina, unresolved in what manner to ask her the easiest of all questions, ere he could bring himself to demand who her friend was.

Erina, not foreseeing the probability of such an interrogation, felt herself confounded by its abruptness. To profess ignorance, which would have been a direct falsehood, appeared to her pure mind unjustifiable, even in the preservation of an important secret; but when she reflected, that her friend's happiness and safety depended on her fidelity to the trust reposed in her honour, Erina found that faith and truth should be equally sacred. To avoid infringing them by prevarication she considered unworthy of her candid nature; and, therefore, after a moment's reflection, she determined to make sincerity the guard of her veracity and fidelity; and with the charming ingenuousness that characterized her as the artless child of perfect innocence, she frankly told

her brother she was not at liberty to disclose any thing relative to Seraphina : adding, as a necessary caution incumbent on her to give Charles, that he must carefully avoid speaking of Seraphina to any person, as much depended on the utmost secrecy respecting her ; and concluded by saying, that if the honour of a sister, or the happiness of her friend, was dear to him, he could best prove it by total silence on the subject of their present discourse.

Thus far Erina's firm reliance on the strict integrity of her brother's principles of honour and prudence, induced her to confide to him the situation of Seraphina, under the persuasion, that it became her duty to guard against any probability of her friend's history being traced and unravelled by the innocent curiosity of Charles's enquiries.

The youth, on his part, could not forbear admiring and respecting the honourable, delicate, and prudent conduct of Erina in an affair, wherein he perceived her friendship for Seraphina, and affection for himself, had been put to the test by a trial of some difficulty ; and he vowed, to his honour, to refrain from any investigation on a subject more interesting to him than ever : since every interview with the lovely incognita had

served to envelope her more closely in an extraordinary and impenetrable mystery, that awakened all his curiosity.

Feeling it necessary to calm the evident uneasiness and apprehensions of Erina for her friend, he assured his sister, that he would faithfully obey her injunctions relative to Seraphina, whom he mentioned having seen twice in London; adding, that his first meeting had been at Colonel Herbert's, on that gentleman's arrival with her from the country; and his second interview with the lovely stranger had taken place some time after in Kensington Gardens, when she was in company with the Duchess of Willesborough. "I have been dying with impatience ever since the first sight of your beautiful and interesting friend," continued Charles, "to learn who she can be. The first time I saw her, I supposed her to be either the daughter of Colonel Herbert or the sister of Wilmot; but I soon learned my supposition was erroneous. I confess," added O'Brien, "my anxiety to learn the situation and connections of your lovely friend increases with time, and strengthens with disappointment; but I pledge my honour not to make any enquiries on a subject, which I perceive has been confined to

your secrecy: were I capable of tempting you, my dear Erina, to infringe your honour, by betraying any trust reposed in it, I should abhor your breach of fidelity, although I gained by it the most earnest desire my heart could feel."

Arriving at the convent gate just as Charles concluded his speech, Erina returned the fraternal embrace, on separating from her brother, with the tenderest adieus; expressive of the affection she paid as a tribute to his character, as well as to the ties of consanguinity which bound them to each other.

As it was early when Erina entered her cloistered abode, she flattered herself Seraphina had not retired to her chamber; and, after making her nightly obeisance to the lady abbess, Erina hastened to the apartment of Rosaline, eager to embrace the two beloved friends of her heart. According to her expectation, she found them still together, and each impatient for her return, most sweetly expressed in kindest salutations, accompanied by looks indicative of that sincerity which is the firmest bond of friendship. Erina, attached by every tie of amity to Rosaline, who was the first that ever bestowed on her the sacred

title of friend, felt herself now equally interested in Seraphina, whom she loved not only as an amiable sufferer, but as the daughter of a person she had reason to reverence under a two-fold character. Colonel Herbert, whom Erina had now discovered to be the father of her sweet friend, claimed the regard of every feeling heart, equally by his virtues as his sufferings; in addition to those claims, which Erina was ever ready to acknowledge, she felt her affection and gratitude just tributes to the associate of her late parent, and the nobly generous patron of her brother.

The various causes for her warm attachment to Seraphina, made Erina strenuously urge the friendly invitation with which she had been charged by her family; but she had the mortification to find, that no solicitation could prevail on Seraphina to pass, even a single day, with her at her lodgings. Yet, although Erina was disappointed in one of the first wishes of her heart, the refusal was managed with so much sweetness, that it was absolutely impossible her friendship could feel itself hurt; and she found new reason to admire the firm adherence of her friend to what she considered a filial duty: and could not withhold her praise from Seraphina, on seeing

the readiness with which she sacrificed every pleasure to principle, without the least assumption of merit for the severest privations, notwithstanding they were voluntary, being left at the convent with entire power to quit it at pleasure.

Rosaline, who had also been left at full liberty to accept any invitation, promised Erina to become her guest until the return of Madame de Briançon; and departed from the convent with less regret at her separation from Seraphina, as their probable future abode in each other's vicinity would afford them constant opportunities of meeting at the nunnery.

Although rejoiced to return to the bosom of a beloved family, Erina parted from Seraphina with extreme sorrow, under the afflicting impression, that after a short time they might never meet again. This idea drew many tears from the two friends; who were both equally affected at the prospect of a speedy eternal separation. Erina renewed the most earnest entreaties for Seraphina's abode with her while she remained in France. "When I quit Paris," added the tender pleader with strong emotion, and in the most moving accents, "I shall immediately return to Ireland,

never, perhaps, to leave my native land again; and then, my sweet Seraphina, even should your destiny liberate you from the seclusion you have chosen, and reconduct you to the world you have relinquished, I shall never, alas! have the joy of embracing the friend of my heart!"

"Tis too probable, my beloved Erina, that we shall soon part for ever," said Seraphina, in mournful cadence; "but I must obey the suggestions of duty to remain inflexible in a purpose, formed in a full conviction of its propriety."

Seraphina wept; and Erina mingled her tears with those of her virtuous friend, repeating several times the consolatory promise of daily visiting her during her stay in Paris.

Rosaline and Erina, equally affected by their adieus to the sorrowful Seraphina, whom they left in the solitude of her chamber, joined Sir Phelim's party in the apartments of the lady abbess.

Erina, in her daily visits to her family, had apprized them that she had unsuccessfully endeavoured to persuade Seraphina to become their

guest, even for a single day. The failure of Erina's hopes destroyed those sanguine expectations Charles had formed, of making an intimate acquaintance with the charming unknown ; but he still flattered himself with the idea, that in some of his daily morning calls at the convent, when he went there to bring Erina to her grandfather's lodgings, the lovely incognita might have been visible in the nunnery parlour : in this hope, however, the poor youth was daily disappointed. Yet he continued to flatter himself, that on the morning fixed for the departure of his sister from the convent, her friend could not fail to make her appearance on the visit of Sir Phe-
lim, Mrs. O'Brien, and himself ; as the compliment was intended equally to the lady abbess and her amiable pensioners. Poor Charles was, however, still doomed to a disappointment more severe, from its constant repetition, and the sanguine hopes entertained that its occurrence on this day would be impossible.

On the entrance of Lady Kinross and his sister, O'Brien's eager looks sought in vain the beautiful object he most desired to behold. The traces of recent tears on the cheeks of Rosaline and Erina disquieted Charles, though he knew not.

exactly the source of an uneasiness, which he felt connected with the idea of the lovely unknown. He pressed, with friendly courtesy, the freely offered hand of Lady Kinross; and then saluted with enthusiasm the blooming cheek of his sister; impressed with the charming idea, that Seraphina's lips most probably had touched the roseate spot he kissed with more than a brother's transport.

He was anxious to enquire about the health of his sister's beloved friend; but his tongue seemed to refuse the office his heart was desirous it should perform; and he found himself unequal to the task of articulating one syllable on the subject nearest his heart.

Whilst Sir Phelim, Mrs. O'Brien, and Charles, were engaged in conversation with the lady abbess, Rosaline and Erina retired to the interior part of the convent to take leave of the sisterhood; amongst whom the nun Agnes, as most beloved, shared the tenderest adieus; and Lady Kinross and Erina quitted her with tears of regret, commending to the good sister's care their sweet friend Seraphina.

Purposing to remain Erina's visitor till the

return of Madame de Briançon, Rosaline left the nunnery without any idea of returning thither to reside again ; and could not avoid giving a sigh at the departure from a place, where peace and friendship had afforded more enjoyment than she expected to find in the gayest scenes of a country to which she felt no attachment. Erina also experienced a sensation of regret at quitting, as she imagined, for ever, an abode endeared to her feeling heart by innumerable delightful recollections of friends and associates whom she was soon to part from for ever ; and dropped a tear of sorrow at the convent gate, as a tribute of sentiment, which the soul of lively sensibility cannot refrain paying, even to inanimate objects long known and soon to be seen no more.

Rejoiced, however, to be restored to the society of a loved family, Erina called forth all her vivacity to entertain, in the best manner in her power, a guest most highly valued ; and the amiable Rosaline, delighted to find herself once more surrounded by friends infinitely esteemed, and in whose company she felt as if restored to her native land, displayed all that sprightly disposition calculated to inspire gaiety congenial with itself. The innocent playfulness of his favourite, Lady Kinross, and the graceful sportiveness of his

sister, afforded O'Brien extreme pleasure, and made him occasionally cheerful, notwithstanding his heart experienced ardent wishes, he believed could never be gratified.

Introduced by Rosaline to an extensive circle of the *beau monde*, and courted, with his family, by a number of Parisians of the highest rank, where he could not avoid seeing himself an object of extreme admiration, Charles felt almost indifferent to every thing, except the performance of his duties, amongst which he considered those of politeness as essential. In conformity, therefore, with urbanity, he frequented private assemblies, the places of public amusement, and visited, as a stranger desirous of information, whatever the gay metropolis of France offered as most worthy observation amongst its buildings, manufactures, and curiosities. In his pursuit of knowledge, in his attendance on the several theatres, the various promenades, and some *petits soupers*, he was accompanied by Sir Phelim, Mrs. O'Brien, and his two charming associates; but although gratified by much that he saw, grateful for the attentions he received, and never weary of paying courtesy to all, he felt his heart ill at ease; and found that continual occupation could alone divert his mind from sadness, on the disappoint-

ment of those sweet hopes he had for some time cherished, of enjoying the society of the too lovely unknown, for whose absence Rosaline's and Erina's company, in some measure, consoled him; although their charming conversation could not compensate, in his opinion, for the loss of the beautiful incognita's presence. Constantly occupied with thoughts of her, not a syllable relating to her escaped his lips, having firmly purposed to observe faithfully the promise he made Erina of abstaining religiously from every enquiry respecting her beloved friend at the convent: his silence, however, did not prevent his indulging an infinity of reflections concerning the maid of his idolatry; every interview with whom had inspired the most lively admiration, mingled with curiosity, increasing in proportion as he found her enveloped in mystery, that promised no elucidation of any circumstance connected with her. On joining his regiment, the extreme intimacy between him and Wilmot, induced O'Brien, one day, to speak to his brother soldier of the beautiful young creature he had seen at their colonel's, hoping the subject would lead to something by which he might be enabled to guess who she was, and whether he could flatter himself with the hope of ever seeing her again; but Wilmot, unreserved as he had been from the first interview with O'Brien, and treating

him with confidence in all respects, was remarkably close on the theme now started by O'Brien; whose enthusiastic encomiums on the charms of the lovely unknown met with no other reply from Wilmot, than a caution against further mention of having seen her at Colonel Herbert's, as much evil might arise from the disclosure of a subject on which honour enjoined his entire secrecy. There was something in Wilmot's manner, on this head, so solemnly impressive, as to convince O'Brien there was some remarkable mystery in the case; and his affectionate regard for Wilmot, added to the unbounded gratitude he felt towards his noble patron, Colonel Herbert, made O'Brien resolve never more to open his lips on an affair both his generous benefactors must have reason to repress an investigation of. But although, in strict conformity with Wilmot's injunction, Charles carefully avoided the most remote reference to the interdicted topic, of all others superiorly interesting to him, yet his thoughts were busily employed in conjectures why such an extraordinary secrecy had been enjoined. On meeting the lovely incognita so unexpectedly, O'Brien's curiosity had been roused anew to feel an increased interest in her, under the endearing titles of his sister's intimate companion and tenderly beloved friend. In addition

to such high claims on his regard, Erina's loved associate appeared, in some manner, connected with his revered patron ; and in that character would have been an interesting object to him, even had not the touching expression of her countenance, and every word and gesture, rendered her fascinating beyond description.

The close intimacy declaredly subsisting between Erina and her friend seemed to authorize his believing, that his sister must be fully acquainted with the name and immediate connections of her companion, and that although there might have been reasons for Wilmot's silence on the subject to him, Erina was most probably not under the same restrictions. Thus persuaded, Charles, after much deliberation, had ventured on an enquiry : perceiving, however, equally to his surprise and disappointment, that his demand would meet with no satisfactory reply from Erina, and finding she was evidently in the secret that to him was impenetrable, O'Brien felt himself at liberty to mention to his sister where and how he had met her friend, in order to account for his curiosity, which might have appeared extraordinary to Erina had she not been acquainted with its causes.

Notwithstanding a constant succession of en-

gagements, Rosaline and Erina never let a day pass without making their promised visit to Seraphina. On these occasions O'Brien, equally from courtesy and inclination, was the escort of Lady Kinross and his sister, though he never flattered himself with the hope of seeing the beautiful recluse: to hear, however, that she was well, to be within the precincts of her retirement, was a degree of enjoyment to the enthusiastic youth, since fate seemed to have no greater happiness of that kind in store for him.

One morning, on his accompanying his fair companions to the convent, he was, as usual, waiting in the parlour till the conclusion of Rosaline's and Erina's visit, when he beheld them enter the room in much apparent agitation. Rosaline's countenance bore strong marks of affliction, the traces of tears were visible; and the sweet smile that commonly adorned Erina's lips had yielded to an expression of soft dejection, while her cheeks were moistened with the glistening drops sympathy had paid as a tribute of affectionate friendship to Seraphina. "Oh! my brother;" cried Erina, in accents of commiseration, "you will feel with me for the sorrows of my beloved friend!—I can now, without a breach of confidence, acquaint you with the

name and connections of Seraphina. If you were interested about her whilst ignorant of her late affecting situation, how much more will you be moved on learning the particulars of her story, when its touching events will inform you, that the charming Seraphina's misfortunes are those of a person most deservedly revered and regarded by you. Know, my dear brother, that in the beloved friend of Rosaline's heart and mine, you saw the suffering daughter of your valued patron, Colonel Herbert, now, alas! involved in heavy affliction!"

"Seraphina, the daughter of my benefactor!" ejaculated O'Brien, in a tone of astonishment; and then, after a moment's pause, he continued, in an accent of interrogation, "and the friend of my sister unhappy from the misfortunes of my nobly generous patron! But tell me all, my dear Erina," cried Charles; "my soul is impatient, and yet dreads to learn the cause of afflictions, I may, alas! lament, without the power of assuaging."

Erina now, in as succinct a manner as possible, related the particulars of Seraphina's tale; and concluded it by the melancholy information she had just communicated to Rosaline and Erina,

that the event so much dreaded, and so greatly guarded against, had actually happened, involving Colonel Herbert in extreme distress both of mind and circumstances, by being totally disinherited. The misfortune," continued Erina, sorrowfully, "is, alas! as irremediable as it is afflicting; since the decease of his father has confirmed the cruel effects of a will, that entailed on Lord Herbert's offspring nothing but a parent's displeasure!"

The affecting history of his kind and noble patron so deeply touched the keenly feeling heart of O'Brien, that he was for some time silenced by the strength of emotions which prevented utterance: but his expressive looks sufficiently indicated, how much he sympathized in the afflictions of persons, who had every claim to excite the most powerful sentiments of a soul endued with acutest sensibility. Erina having concluded the tale that had so extremely moved her brother, mourned with him in silence the melancholy catastrophe, that had deprived her beloved friend of that fortune requisite to maintain the dignity of her birth.

To the fast falling tears of Erina, and the deep sighs of O'Brien, Lady Kinross added her's. She had not, until that morning, learned the rela-

tionship of Seraphina to Colonel Herbert, because Erina's notions of honour were too strict to permit her divulging, even to a dearly esteemed friend and the most intimate confidant of her mind, the secret of another ; which, though casually discovered, she considered herself equally bound to guard inviolably, as if it had been entrusted to her keeping. The knowledge of Seraphina's relationship to the patron so revered by the respected family of her beloved friend Erina, increased considerably the interest Rosaline had already felt in Seraphina's fate ; and the amiable Lady Kinross, blessed with affluence, had a heart to commiserate the privations she had never experienced : her soul, therefore, was most sensibly touched by the adverse circumstances of a lovely girl, whose high descent, and personal and mental perfections, entitled her to that splendour of situation, the loss of fortune would deprive her of. Yet, although bred in every elegance suitable to the expectations of a rich heiress of noble birth, and recently honoured by the acquisition of a title, which had, for two generations, rewarded the naval prowess of her ancestors, great in name as they had in past times been famed for martial deeds, Lady Kinross valued not wealth, except as the means of dispensing benefits to those who stood in need of them, and increasing her own

happiness by diffusing around her numberless enjoyments to those unprovided with the gifts of fortune. She rejoiced continually in the power of serving worthy individuals, and delighted in the means afforded her of rewarding virtue, in distinguishing its possessors by her favours: and she lamented, that her friend Seraphina's contracted circumstances would rob her generous soul of the joy arising from blessing many, whom she might now have the pain of commiserating without the power of relieving. Rosaline sympathized also with Seraphina's distress on account of her amiable parent's sufferings; but she endeavoured to reap consolation, and administer it to her friends, O'Brien and Erina, by the reflection, that Seraphina, although grieved for the sorrows of her father and mother, had a mind superior to every selfish feeling; and that Colonel Herbert and his lady, now, by the demise of the late Lord Herbert, viscount and viscountess by rank, notwithstanding present pecuniary difficulties, would probably, in the course of time, rise to wealth by interest; and that in case it should fail to exalt them in the great world, their station must always be rendered highly respectable by those virtues, calculated to dignify the lowest situation in life.

“ I have already noticed with admiration,” cried Erina, “ the fortitude Seraphina shows under the most trying circumstances: ’tis true, she grieves not for herself; her soul seems, however, keenly alive to the affliction of her parents; and the idea of their suffering on her account will be sufficient to render her truly wretched: it ought, therefore, to be the business of friendship to offer her consolation; and in every way in my power to afford it, my affection for Seraphina will prompt me to all possible effect in order to comfort her mind.”

“ I think,” said Rosaline, “ our presence will be necessary, in order to divert her from dwelling too intently on her unhappy situation.”

“ Let me entreat you then, my dear Lady Kinross and Erina,” interrupted Charles, “ to urge the amiable suffering Miss Herbert to honour us by the acceptance of our invitation. The sister of the much indebted O’Brien owes more than such a trivial courtesy to the daughter of her brother’s benefactor.”

“ Would to Heaven,” cried Erina, “ my powers were equal to my desire of offering

consolation to my sweet friend Seraphina! All that my warmest friendship can divine shall be essayed to comfort the lovely sufferer. I will instantly return to Seraphina, and will not leave her till I have brought her to consent to accompany me home."

"May all the influence of persuasive eloquence hang on your lips, my amiable sister!" cried O'Brien; "and whilst Lady Kinross assists your endeavours, my dear Erina, I will hasten home, and briefly informing my worthy grandfather and my good mother of the unpleasant situation in which events have placed Miss Herbert, I shall be successful in inspiring the liveliest interest in her fate: and I am too well acquainted with the amiable dispositions of our parents to doubt their offering every courteous hospitality, and all the offices of sentiment, to one whose claims to our politest and most friendly attentions are so strong, as those of my benefactor's daughter must ever be; especially when adverse circumstances render her less fortunate than she merits."

O'Brien now hurried away on an errand of benevolence by the sensibility that always interested him in the happiness or misery of his fellow-creatures. According to his expectations, he

found the baronet and Mrs. O'Brien ready to offer every delicate attention to Miss Herbert ; whom they immediately waited upon in person, to urge her acceptance of their invitation to pass some time with Erina. That lovely girl, aided by Lady Kinross, had, in the meanwhile, used every argument to prevail on Seraphina to become their associate at Sir Phelim's until the arrival of Lord and Lady Herbert ; who had announced to their daughter an intention of setting out for Paris, as soon as their affairs admitted, in order to conduct her to England.

The solicitude of Erina's friendship had been so sweetly evinced, that Seraphina found it absolutely impossible any longer to withstand becoming her guest, since seclusion had ceased to be her duty ; and, in compliance with the urgent and united entreaties of all her friends, she consented to accompany the O'Briens to the place of their abode.

To express the transport of Charles on this occasion would be beyond the power of language glowing as his own, and can only be conceived by a soul of equal enthusiasm.

All that the politest attentions of the worthy

baronet, the constant courtesy of Mrs. O'Brien, the affectionate solicitude of lady Kinross, the endearing friendship of Erina, and the incessant and respectfully animated, yet tenderest assiduties of the engaging Charles, could effect to render Seraphina's visit delightful, served to sooth the agitation of her mind. Young as she was, her heart had been taught by the lesson of her life to regulate the keen sensibility of her soul, and to keep every desire in perfect subjection : and this constant discipline had succeeded to adapt her admirably for the trials Providence had prepared as the exercise for her uncommon virtue.

Seraphina's feelings were by nature most powerful, but her reason was equally strong to retain them in perfect subordination. The susceptibility of an ardent soul was restrained in such bounds by the virtuous energy of her character, that her sensibility was directed to feel for others rather than herself. The loss of fortune, the privation of the enjoyments attendant on riches, affected her only as she feared and was assured her parents would lament their contracted circumstances for her sake ; she felt, therefore, keenly for them, although indifferent about herself. But her affliction, notwithstanding it was deep,

borrowed calmness from the sublimity of her mind; and instead of tears and dejection evincing the grief she felt, the serenity of her fine countenance was shaded by a soft expression of sentiment, that added inexpressible interest to every beautiful feature, while the dignified composure of her manner rendered her equally touching as she was admirable.

Seraphina had not been many hours the guest of Sir Phelim's family, ere there was established between them and their engaging visitor that perfect intelligence and mutual confidence which is the result of even the most recent acquaintance, when it has been formed by reciprocal esteem, and is every moment increased by fresh demonstrations of regard on each side, cemented by that refinement of ideas and sentiment which is the essence of true, exalted, and lasting friendship. The tender interest evinced by all the most delicate attentions every member of her beloved Erina's respected relatives could pay, rendered Seraphina happier than she had long been; and she experienced that kind of tranquillity which arises from the reflection, that no greater evil than that which has occurred can happen. Released from a state of dreadful suspense, and from the most painful concealment, Seraphina felt light in

spirits; compared to what she had been since the period of quitting her revered mother's retirement; and the prospect of being soon restored to the arms of parents whose consolation she hoped to become, added to the pleasure she in the meanwhile enjoyed, surrounded by the sincerest and most agreeable friends, inspired Seraphina with that sweet placidity of mind that cannot fail to render the manners cheerful. Undisguised as innocent, this lovely child of sentiment and virtue now rejoiced in the liberty of laying aside the veil of secrecy and mystery, and of assuming the character natural to her disposition, frank as it was amiable. She delighted in conversing on the subject of her parents; and perceiving each of her friends infinitely interested about her revered father and mother, and deeply impressed by their virtues, Seraphina produced for their perusal the latter she had received from Lord Herbert, containing the particulars of his recent trials and present sufferings, in which Sir Phelim's family felt the most lively sympathy.

The packet, addressed to the Hon. Miss Herbert, was handed by her to O'Brien; who, bowing an elegantly sentimentel acknowledgment of the confidence by which he considered himself honored

beyond expression, obeyed the gentle and gracious command of Seraphina, and read as follows :

“ LONDON, Sept. 1st.

“ I KNOW not in what manner to apprise my beloved child of a misfortune brought on her by the parent whose business it was to ward off every injury from the being committed by Heaven to his paternal care. Mine, though ever watchful over the interest of a loved daughter, availed not to shelter her from evils, anticipated with dread from the period of her birth by those to whom she owed it.

“ Already informed, my dear Seraphina, as you are, of the danger that threatened you with an unfortunate fate, you are, I trust, sufficiently prepared for its probable occurrence to experience too great a shock on learning, that your sun of worldly possessions, which from the dawn of your life has ever been clouded, is now set in the darkest gloom of night.

“ After this it will be almost needless to add, that I am totally disinherited ; and that my father's demise has confirmed the decree of his last will and testament, by which I am deprived of the

smallest portion of a considerable fortune, that was entirely in the late possessor's power to bequeath as the thought fit.

“ In consequence of this event I am left destitute of any provision, except the very limited annual income of my profession, scarcely sufficient to support the rank I hold in the army, even were I a single man; and on which it will be impossible to maintain my family in any degree of respectability consistent with the title, that of all my father's possessions is the only one of which his displeasure had not the power to deprive me.

“ Behold me than a soldier, ennobled by a viscount's title, without any thing to sustain the rank of either character except a sword, the spirit of a gentleman, and untarnished honour! Your noble mother smiles and tells me I am still rich. Blessed with her love and your innocence, my Seraphina, virtue tells me also that I am not poor as a man, did not the feelings of the husband and the father whisper to my fears that one short instant may, by my death, rob my wife and virgin daughter of all their present scanty dependance, and of all protection. But I will not murmur—'tis the will of Heaven we should suffer, and let us kiss the rod that corrects us. Providence, my

child, chastens those he loves; then let us be happy, for does he not protect the fatherless and widow, and those who are virtuous and need assistance? Thus says religion, and I patiently submit; but yet the mortal will feel, and feel acutely, though he dare not repine. Such am I. But I must acquaint you with the particulars of our unhappy fate.

“ A few days since I received a message from my father, importing that he was ill and wished to see me. I hastened to my parent, and found him apparently approaching a hasty end. Affected by the sight of his sufferings, I endeavoured to assuage them by the most tender filial attention. My father seemed moved at first; but the natural severity of his manner returned, heightened, I trust and would fain flatter myself, by the pain of his disorder, to which I had always wished to attribute an irritability of temper that often made me unhappy. With his usual severity of countenance (I believe the excruciating torment of his gout had originally occasioned, and at length confirmed into habit,) he told me, he had for some time entertained suspicion that I was privately united to the lady with whom I had formed an attachment in Spain: he said, the idea had at first been suggested by my constant refusal to marry; adding,

that my last rejection of a proposal the most advantageous had so incensed him as to provoke him to cut me off with a shilling, since I had so provokingly baffled all his views for my aggrandizement and independence. ‘This will,’ added my father, presenting it to me, ‘is the instrument of your total disinheritance, in case you have been guilty of the indiscretion and filial disobedience of which I suspect you. I know you to be a man of honour and veracity, and, therefore, confide to your hands my last testament. If your duty to a father is unshaken, I command you to destroy the will; as the property of which I die possessed, must, of course, devolve to you as my rightful heir: in that case you will take care of Wilmot. Should you, on the contrary, be conscious of having acted in direct disobedience to the positive injunctions I laid on you to break off your attachment to the Spanish lady, you will find yourself considered as I believe an undutiful son merits.”

“This address to my honour and veracity, my father,’ I replied, ‘enjoins me not to infringe either my integrity or truth. By prevarication I might avoid your displeasure, and evade the forfeiture you consider due to disobedience; for I can truly say I am guiltless of marrying in

direct opposition to your injunctions; but honour, in conjunction with the solemnity of the scene, prevent the possibility of my deceiving you, and compel me, not only to avoid all subterfuge, but declare the truth it might conceal. Learn, therefore, that I am united to the object of my first attachment; but know, also, that I am not culpable of any disobedience, except that of not breaking off a connection too sacred to be annulled by a father's command. Urgent circumstances had compelled me to marry without waiting your approbation; and the only reparation that remained in my power, after an union necessarily formed without your concurrence or your consent, was carefully to conceal it for ever from your knowledge; which was the only means circumstances afforded me of preserving the wife I had solemnly vowed to cherish, and, at the same time, sparing you the vexation of learning, that I had entered into engagements, I too late learned, you would never pardon.'

" I was proceeding to assure my father of my dutiful submission to his last decree, even though it was against the dearest interest of my heart; but death had already fixed his features and my fate!—my parent had expired—and with him all my dependance for my wife and child!

‘ The will dropped from my chilled and trembling hand; my fate of insurmountable difficulty and extreme distress was decided, for death had deprived me of every thing, in taking from this world the only being who had a right to cancel the instrument of my disinheritance. As the last will of my deceased father, I revered it with filial and religious duty; and taking it from the death-bed of my parent, where it had dropped at the moment I beheld him expire, I deposited it in a drawer in his chamber, under the sacred trust of his seal, to remain for the inspection of his executors.

“ I am too well acquainted with your principles, my beloved Seraphina, to think, for a moment, that you could condemn the avowal to which honour obliged me, although I forfeited by it your advantage and all my hopes of temporal enjoyment; but peace, originating from conscious rectitude, supports me under the most trying affliction.

“ I shall hasten to Paris, accompanied by your mother, as soon as my affairs permit me, to have the only happiness now remaining for my enjoyment, namely, that of embracing my child, and of endeavouring to console her for those

privations she is fated to experience in this world, where retirement has ever been her lot, and where her pleasure henceforth must be circumscribed by the loss of that fortune I lament, and shall never cease to regret, whilst I see an adored wife and daughter deprived of the splendour and felicity to which their birth and virtues entitle them.

“ Adieu ! my loved child ! your mother and I greet you most tenderly, and unite in prayers for your consolation.”

O'Brien, who had never desired riches, except for benevolent purposes, could not suppress a wish that fortune had put it in his power to lay wealth, with his heart, at the feet of the lovely Seraphina ; for his ardent soul would have rejoiced, beyond expression, in the devotion of his life to procure happiness to his noble friend, Lord Herbert, and his charming daughter. This earnest wish now inspired the amiable youth with every idea of elegant gallantry which could afford Miss Herbert a constant succession of amusement ; and the sweet smiles with which her gratitude acknowledged his attentions, repaid, with immense interests, the pains Charles took to prevent

Erina's guest from feeling one moment of weariness.

According to the rules propriety prescribed on the death of a parent, Seraphina assumed deep mourning, and avoided going into public, although she could not grieve as an affectionate granddaughter for one who would never have considered her as such : she saw, however, with admiration, her father's forbearance of any invective against the parent who had treated him with severity and cruel injustice, and resolved never to give him uneasiness by any disrespect to the memory of her grandsire.

The innumerable graces of her manner, united to the exalted virtues of her character, the uncommon sweetness of her temper, and the excellence of her understanding, would have been sufficient to attach the ardent soul of Charles to her by the most enthusiastic bonds, had not the exquisite beauty of her person assisted in exciting a passion strong as it was delicate. Each day disclosed to the enamoured youth some new perfection in Seraphina, calculated to render his love eternal; but whilst he hourly felt that she was the only being who could ever possess his heart, he found it impossible to harbour a wish

of interesting her's in his favour, unequal as he was to offer her a situation worthy her acceptance.—“No!” cried O'Brien, mentally, “I swear, by all that is most sacred in love, never to take any advantage, the most flattering opportunities might afford me, to win the affections of the divine Seraphina! for, by all that is honourable, I would rather die of a hopeless passion, than subject the heavenly creature I adore to feel for me even a single pain of tender compassion, although it were to save my life; and I would infinitely rather languish in the agonizing torments of despairing love through a long life of absolute wretchedness in seeing Seraphina in the arms of a man who could make her happy, than induce her to gratify my passion in becoming my wife, since fortune withholds from me the means of placing her in that splendour she is so calculated to adorn!”

As O'Brien pondered thus, with folded arms, in the corner of Sir Phelim's saloon, one morning, ere the family were assembled at breakfast, Seraphina entered; and seeing the youth, lately so gay and blooming with animation, now pale and dejected, she approached him with an air of gracious courtesy, and in the softest accents of sentiment, demanded the cause of his altered

appearance and visible uneasiness; adding, as an apology for a question that might seem, she feared, impertinent, that her heart was deeply interested for every member of a family whom she should ever remember with the most grateful affection.

At Seraphina's approach O'Brien rose to accost her with an air of respectful salutation, and fixing his eyes on her's, he felt them beam the sweetest expression of sensibility, that wakened the keenest ardours of his soul; he saw in her looks, and observed in her manner, a tenderness of feeling her innocence sought not to conceal, unconscious of cherishing sentiments warmer than those of that exalted friendship her heart paid as a tribute of gratitude due to the relations of Erina. As the beloved friend, Charles was regarded by Seraphina, while the claims of his soft attentions to herself, and his personal and mental qualities, gained him the highest place in her esteem and admiration. Guileless as she was grateful, and sincere as affectionate, this sweet child of sensibility and candour evinced, in each look, gesture, and word, all she felt for every member of a family, with whom she found herself domesticated as with the nearest and dearest relatives. Without one spark of vanity, O'Brien's

acute penetration, and keen susceptibility, taught him to discern, in the modest simplicity of Seraphina's manner, those flattering opinions, and that pure, yet strong attachment, which might soon lead to the most powerful and settled affection. To have inspired such sentiments in the chaste bosom of the lovely Seraphina, was the highest delight to the soul of O'Brien; but amidst the exquisite felicity he experienced in the approbation and regard of the being he adored, he possessed such an empire over his mind, and so great a command of his conduct, as neither to desire, nor endeavour to obtain, the triumph of such a decided love in the heart of Seraphina, as would have confirmed her his for ever, with feelings congenial to his own. O'Brien's soul was too noble to wish a self-gratification at the expence of his principles; which, delicate and honourable as his passion was ardent, made him more anxious for Seraphina's happiness than his own; and in the height of his enthusiastic admiration of the maid of his idolatry, he was sufficiently disinterested to hope, that the perfections of which he was enamoured, might attach to Seraphina a heart warm as his own, and that her perfections might shine in a sphere superior to any he could ever form an idea of attaining.

Such had been often the generous aspirations of O'Brien's exalted soul, whilst most absorbed in the adoration of Seraphina.

Her eyes now beamed on his heart the most powerful influence of beauty, heightened by sentiment; she had never appeared so supremely angelic as at the moment when the soft accents of her enchanting voice, penetrating with her glances into the inmost recesses of his soul, and awakening all its enthusiastic ardours, spoke to his sensibility the genuine language of a delicate attachment, expressed with the bewitching graces of virgin modesty. O'Brien gazed an instant, lost in the dear enchantments of that love known only to minds like his, where passion is sublimed into a celestial flame. The interest Seraphina so charmingly expressed about him, with all the innocence of maiden purity, combined with all the warmth of refined friendship, whispered to his fancy, that time would mature it into love, without his taking any measure that the most rigid honour could condemn. Charmed with the thought, his romantic imagination saw, in perspective, a rapid rise in his profession, and represented to him, that he might soon have the power of laying a soldier's trophies of fame and honour at the feet of Seraphina. Fired with the extatic idea,

he seized her yielding hand, and thanked her, in an impassioned tone, for the flattering solicitude with which she had honoured him; whilst Seraphina gave him an encouraging smile, that, in artless language, delicately told the youth, his address was more agreeable than well understood by a heart of maiden innocence and youthful inexperience, unaware of admitting that affection she had, perhaps, already cherished.

O'Brien's soul felt the delicacy of a situation which might become inimical to the serenity of Seraphina's mind; and an instant's recollection called to his aid all the strong principles which were ever ready to assist him with every effort virtue could make. Respectfully bowing on the passive hand of Seraphina, he, mentally, vowed never to transgress the laws honour prescribed to him, which interdicted his evincing a passion that might induce a return, and which could not fail of awakening that soft pity in Seraphina's tender bosom that might occasion her uneasiness, and prevent her bestowing her hand on some amiable man of high rank and fortune, worthy the possession of such an invaluable gem as the heart of Seraphina.

Whilst O'Brien made this vow to honour, he

relinquished her hand with the most respectful grace ; and endeavouring to summon all his fortitude to the aid of his principles, he informed Seraphina, that the perspective of life often inspired such serious reflections, as to induce a gravity in his looks and manner, foreign to the natural gaiety of his disposition.

Seraphina, with a sweet smile of ingenuous regard, told the youth, she found his vivacity too agreeable not to lament its interruption ; and the family immediately assembling at breakfast relieved O'Brien from an embarrassment between love and honour. In proportion as an hourly increasing admiration of his sister's friend rivetted the chains of his captivity, he felt the necessity of fortifying himself against any surprise by which he might be inadvertently led to a discovery of his passion. Constantly exposed, as he was, by an intimate association with the object of his love, frequently alone with her, and hourly called on, by her delicately familiar intercourse, to give way to the gallantry of his disposition, in a thousand instances he was put to the severest trial. To behold the lovely maid was pleasure mixed with pain ; to converse with her, was enjoyment combined with uneasiness ; to pay her the elegant attention of courtesy, was delight mingled with

apprehension; to hear the dulcet tones of her voice, to listen to the charming strains of her touching music, to see the easy grace of all her enchanting movements, to behold her bewitching smiles, often directed to himself, to sit beside her for hours, in the contemplation of her sense, her accomplishments; to observe, hourly, some new charm of mind, some newly-discovered personal perfection, was present ecstasy mingled with a perspective of future misery, which preyed upon the heart of Charles with a strongly depressing influence; but as his spirits sunk, virtue supplied his mind with fresh vigour for the arduous conflict honour urged as requisite. Sensible as he was that the violence of his passion demanded restraint on each look and action, he endeavoured to attain the command over himself, which is seldom resolutely attempted without ensuring the best success; aware that the peace arising from conscious rectitude must console him for those privations his principles imposed, and those acute sufferings hopeless love never fails to inflict on a soul of exquisite sensibility. O'Brien did, indeed, guard his secret so effectually, that no one perceived the growth of a passion, which had taken such root as to render its eradication impossible. The youth himself found his case so desperate as not to admit any hope of a cure.

Meanwhile, equally unconscious of cherishing in her own bosom, as of encouraging in the breast of O'Brien a flame that threatened the destruction of their felicity, Seraphina behaved to her concealed lover with that enchanting ease and engaging confidence, which is the nurse of love.

The lively sensibility of her soul hourly displayed itself in the eloquent expression of her eyes, in the varying colour of her lovely cheek, in the elegant movements of her perfect form; and Charles's feelings were too much in unison with its congenial spirit not to vibrate in accord with all the sensations of Seraphina: if O'Brien's passion was stronger than her's, it was equally pure as that which, like the fire that burned under the vestal's care, warmed the virgin heart of the chaste maid.

Charles's trials, and consequently his conflicts, became daily more severe; yet he maintained the honourable purpose of enduring every thing to preserve the peace of his noble patron's daughter, whom events had placed in circumstances that made him feel the guardian of her heart. He had vowed not to betray the trust with which his situation invested him; and he would rather have died the victim of despairing mania, for hopeless

love of Seraphina, than have taken the advantage put within his reach, of inducing her to become the wife of a subaltern dependant on future fortune. His birth was sufficiently exalted to make him aspire to a noble connection ; he was a youth of too much spirit to think of forming an alliance beneath what an illustrious descent entitled him to expect ; and he was much too lofty in his ideas to marry for riches ; but he was also too spirited and noble-minded to bear that the idol of his soul should submit to any of the inconveniences attendant on limited circumstances through an affection for him, which might induce her to forego the advantages of fortune and splendour for his sake ; not that O'Brien valued them more than Seraphina, who, in the confidence of her heart, had frequently explained her ideas on the subject of wealth and grandeur so fully, as to convince Charles her soul was too exalted to attach itself to riches and magnificence : on the contrary, he found, from the whole tenor of her conduct and opinions, a predilection for intellectual enjoyments, and for those domestic scenes of social felicity and elegant economy which constitute the bliss of life, by divesting it of all those vain desires and unnecessary cares which accompany greatness in the splendid scenes of the world. With the most refined habits, Seraphina had

united that power of self-denial, and those notions of strict frugality which render fortune unnecessary to an elegant appearance. Like O'Brien in this, as in almost every respect, he had found in her that concentration of female excellence which had ever been the object of his ideal love; and in Seraphina, therefore, he could not avoid adoring the epitome of feminine perfection. He had, indeed, after much search, met with the being of his idolatry; that maid capable of inspiring a passion pure as her virgin innocence, ardent as his enthusiastic soul. Behold the divine creature for whom he could undertake every thing, to effect whose happiness nothing seemed impossible to the energetic youth, who felt, that to die for her would be practicable.

Whilst in the daily and hourly suffrance of all those mental agonies a martyr to hopeless love can endure, who purposes to bear every extremity of pain without complaining, and who resolutely submits to the cruellest torments of a despairing passion, without wavering in his resolves, to perish the victim of the most delicately refined sense of honour, circumstances were in preparation which appeared as the reward of his virtue;

whilst, in effect, they constituted, like many of our temporal blessings, the greatest trials for the human heart.

By letters from London O'Brien was informed, that seven thousand pounds per annum, with the fine estate and seat of Castle Dermot, near Glenrock, in Ireland, exclusive of property to a considerable amount, had been bequeathed to him by his late friend Lord Clanmourne, who dying without heirs, had left the greater part of his fortune to the youth, whom having promised to serve, he felt himself bound to consider in his will by a testimony of esteem, and an evidence of the sincerity of professions, which, regard for O'Brien's mother, had rendered sacred.

This unexpected accession of fortune at the moment it was most acceptable to him, and in a manner the most flattering, since it bore incontrovertible testimony of the affectionate remembrance of a man in whose friendship he had cause to glory, did not prevent O'Brien greatly lamenting the decease of Lord Clanmourne. In assuming deep mourning for that amiable nobleman Charles's feelings accorded with his habit; and it became a subject of infinite regret to him

that circumstances had latterly interrupted all intercourse with his noble friend ; whose memory would be endeared by esteem and gratitude.

Sir Phelim's family had souls too exalted to be elated by prosperity : but they were also too pious to be unthankful to Providence for benefits which, instead of considering as rewards, they regarded as additional obligations to the fulfilment of innumerable duties. O'Brien, now master of considerable property, felt himself merely as a steward, placed in an office of trust and responsibility for the dispensation of good to others equally as of advantage to himself ; and his whole ideas centered in an ardent desire to act, not only for the temporal but eternal benefit of himself and those connected with him either nearly or remotely.

He now thought himself in a situation of sufficient affluence to offer his hand to Seraphina without a breach of honour, or the idea of degradation to the daughter of Lord Herbert ; and the prospect of rising rapidly to an eminent rank in his profession, the hope of signalling himself in the service of his king and country, and thus becoming, not only a useful member of society, but an object not quite unworthy the rich prize of Seraphina's affection, and the consideration of

his generous benefactor, who had so nobly patronised him, gave his ardent soul the most exquisite delight ; but amidst all the felicity those blissful prospects inspired, the enthusiastic O'Brien's heart was not so wholly absorbed by the passions of love and glory, and the sentiments of gratitude to Lord Herbert, as to render him insensible to any feeling that ennobles human nature : ever ready to answer the smallest claim to his attention, his bosom seemed to expand with the increased power of performing each relative and social duty ; and he experienced superlative delight in the hope of dispensing happiness, not only to his beloved family, but to a wide circle of friends and dependents.

Castle Dermot, a magnificent mansion in the vicinity of his natal spot, was surrounded by a most beautiful park and estate adjoining Sir Phe-
lim's domain. O'Brien reflected, with pleasure, that in fulfilling the duties of his station, as the successor of Lord Clanmourne, he should be performing at once the obligations of his public and private situation, since he should frequently be called to the scenes of his early life to enrich his tenants by his beneficence, whilst he cheered his revered grandsire by every filial office. If the possession of unexpected fortune afforded gratifi-

cation to the soul of Charles, it was a gratification of the noblest kind, unmixed with a single selfish or sordid idea. The amiable youth had often lamented, without the smallest reference to himself, the circumscribed situation of Sir Phelim, and the consequent self-denials and privations of a beloved family; the generous youth now flattered himself with the hope that his worthy grad-sire would pass the remainder of his life, divested of those cares for his offspring's advantage which had occasioned the good baronet some difficulty in his former days: Charles also indulged in the intention of repaying all his mother's kind attentions to him, by affording her every possible indulgence instead of continuing, as heretofore, a pensioner on maternal generosity; and whilst his heart glowed with filial gratitude, fraternal tenderness prompted the wish of settling on his sister a handsome independance. Such were the noble plans and affectionate purposes of O'Brien's exalted soul, which felt all the benevolence of an angelic nature, and consequently experienced the supremest felicity mortals are permitted to enjoy in this world, where virtue can alone constitute happiness.

Every member of Sir Phelim's domestic circle participated in the enjoyments of O'Brien. Af-

ter the tears of affectionate regret, paid as a tribute due to the memory of the Earl of Clannourne by the baronet's family, social pleasures chased the hours of every day. Sir Phelim grew young ; for, with a good deal of care, he had also lost the weight of age ; Mrs. O'Brien's mind was placid ; Erina bloomed in vivacity ; Lady Kinross felt happy in the participation of the felicity of her dear friends ; and Seraphina smiled the serenity of a heart replete with virtue and contentment.

O'Brien, no longer afraid of indulging a passion which his honour now encouraged instead of interdicting, ceased to dread the charms of Seraphina ; he abandoned himself to love and hope ; and sought, rather than avoided, a constant intercourse with the idol of his admiration ; but he gave himself up to all the rapturous emotions of a lover without declaring himself one ; resolved to wait the permission of Lord Herbert to address his daughter. O'Brien had all the romance of a lover, without any of the imprudence which too frequently is the characteristic of an enthusiastic youth under the influence of violent passion. Charles was not only an ardently impassioned and romantic lover, but he was a youth gifted with the nicest sense of honour, and the strictest notions

of delicacy, which made him anxious that his addresses should be recommended to the object of his love under the sanction of a parent's approving voice; and the recollection that Seraphina's father, as his kind patron, claimed every respectful attention in his power to shew, made O'Brien resolve to check his impatience by the rules of propriety. Lord and Lady Herbert were daily expected by their daughter, who had written to acquaint her parents with the hospitably polite attentions of the baronet's family immediately on her acceptance of their invitation.

Whist waiting with eager anxiety the arrival of Lord Herbert, O'Brien apprised his grandsire, mother, Erina, and even his favourite Lady Kinross, of his intentions relative to the lovely Seraphina; and he had extreme happiness in learning, that the choice of his heart was approved by his parents and sister: for Charles felt the consent of his family and their advice essential to the completion of his felicity.

With all a lover's impatience, and alternate hopes and fears, he anxiously looked for the arrival of Lord and Lady Herbert, whilst the object of his adoration experienced none of those violent

emotions that agitated her admirer's breast—the bosom of Seraphina reposed in profound peace.

Reading, music, painting, and elegant works of ingenuity, winged the hours of social intercourse in the circle of Sir Phelim's family. One morning, whilst the gallant Charles was reading to the "*three graces*," as he poetically denominated his lovely associates, Patric M'Shane presented a large packet to Seraphina; who, recognising the superscription as her father's hand, immediately broke the seal with trepidation, and with equal surprise and emotion perused the following letters :—

LETTER THE FIRST,

Addressed to the Hon. Miss Herbert.

" St. James's-square, September the 14th.

" My beloved Seraphina may be, perhaps, astonished to see me date this letter from the house of my late father. She will be still more amazed to hear that I am in the legal possession of all the effects, and the whole fortune of which I was disinherited by the will of my late parent.

Not to keep you, my child, however, in suspense, I hasten to acquaint you with the extraordinary obligations conferred on me, on your mother, on you, by the most amiable of beings. You have heard me mention Frederic Wilmot with high encomiums, but you will find them inferior to his virtues ; which his own acts and letters can best do justice to, since they pourtray his conduct and sentiments in their true colours far superior to any praise I could bestow on either. To those descriptions of his heart and head I refer you, anxious to make you feel towards the author of our happiness the gratitude which is so justly due from all of us. Ever impressed with a deep sense of my obligations to the noble youth, I must feel myself infinitely his debtor in offering him *all* I have to bestow, namely, a father's affection, a parent's care. Your mother feels towards Wilmot as I do ; I will not dictate to you, my child, in what manner to repay the services of a youth to whom you are indebted for every thing you may ever enjoy. Peruse our correspondence, judge and decide for yourself ; I claim no right to dictate to your heart, and remain convinced, that principles like your's must direct you right.

“ May happiness crown my Seraphina accord-

ing to the wishes of a father and mother, who unite in prayers for their most tenderly loved child.

“HERBERT.”

LETTER THE SECOND,

*Enclosed in the foregoing, and addressed to
Cornet Frederic Wilmot.*

“Forest Cottage, September the 6th.

“In the sylvan retreat, where I have so long been compelled to conceal the choice of my youth, I had retired to the consolation of domestic enjoyments, and to acquaint Lady Herbert with the narrowness of our future prospects, when I was surprised by a letter from my lawyer, acquainting me of my being put in possession of all the property left from me by my late father's will. Having been informed by him on his death-bed that I was disinherited, I had appointed persons to inspect the arrangement of my parent's affairs, unwilling to subject myself to more pain than was necessarily incumbent on me to take in putting a seal on his effects, and paying the last filial duties relative to his obsequies. Hoping and believing he had taken care of you,

my dear Frederic, it became indifferent to me how my father had disposed of the remainder of his fortune ; and it was not until this day I learned that it had been entirely bequeathed to you, and settled on your heirs ; and that nothing but the forms prescribed by law to give me a legal title to the property so devised would have informed me of what it was your earnest wish to conceal, namely, that I hold every sixpence of my father's fortune, by a deed of gift from you, for ever.

“ The obligations you have most generously conferred upon me, dear and incomparable youth, have been infinitely enhanced by the nobly delicate mode in which they have been performed. But in spite of your wishes to avoid any assumption of merit for great actions, and your desire to shun every acknowledgment I could endeavour to express for the exalted deeds by which I have been so highly benefitted, my sense of your extraordinary virtues, and my gratitude for the inestimable services they have rendered me and mine, would seek utterance, did not language fail in the attempt to speak your praises, and my thanks sufficiently animated to do justice to either. I desist, therefore, from the vain endeavour of expressing my admiration of your qualities, my esteem for your pre-eminent character ; and must refrain,

also, from thanking you by words too feeble to speak my gratitude. But if the actions of my whole future life, in every testimony of a father's care and affection, can do justice to my heart, they will convince you that you are regarded by me as a son.

“ To insist on your retaining the whole fortune I consider still as your property by right, would, I am sensible, wound the generous feelings of your noble soul ; but remember, Frederic, you will infinitely grieve my heart in rejecting a settlement such as you have every claim to as a son. To me you have been more than any child could be to a parent. Yes, Frederic, I forget not how often you have interposed to reconcile me to mine ; and I must ever remember, that you employed your influence with my father for no purpose but to serve me in averting his displeasure from me. In return for these important benefits, I remained, as I ever must, your debtor ; since I had no recompence in my power to offer you except my gratitude and confidence : in your honour I reposed the secret of my marriage, and you were faithful to the trust ; for, when we entered the field as associates in arms and in danger, you swore, by a soldier's honour, that in case I fell in battle you would protect my wife and daughter.

I knew the vow was sacred, and would have died in peace under the firm persuasion that in you, my widow and fatherless child would find a consolation for all they might lose by my decease. One idea alone troubled the happiness I experienced in committing my wife and daughter to your care, and encouraging the notion that Seraphina's beauty and virtue might make a tender impression on your heart, and that was a fear lest your attachment to the offspring of my clandestine marriage might entail on you my father's displeasure, and deprive you of the good offices I knew he intended you; for believe me, Frederic, I was too sincerely your friend to desire the happiness of my child at the expence of your advantage. The power of now uniting your inter-interests in one would afford me infinite delight; I think Seraphina worthy of you, and would, therefore, joyfully bestow her on you under the persuasion of ensuring, by that means, your mutual felicity: be convinced, however, that did I not think her the best gift I could offer you as the reward of your uncommon merits, and the surest testimony of my warmest friendship for you, I would not indulge the flattering hope of making you my son by sacred and legal titles. Of one thing be certain, that in mentioning this favourite desire of my heart I mean not to lay any obliga-

tion on your's. No, Frederic, I, of all men, can least assume the smallest right to direct the tender sentiments of the soul, or dispose of the hand of my child. Remain, also, assured, that gratitude, equally with honour, attaches me to you for ever by every paternal tie ; for, although neither the law nor religious ceremonies should connect you with me by the name of son, my heart will bestow that endearing title on you, and will ever bind me to you, most sacredly, as a tenderly affectionate father.

“ HERBERT.”

“ P. S.—Meet me in town next week as early as you can. I shall repair immediately to the house in St. James's-square, which I shall never forget I hold, not as a paternal possession, but as the gift of your generosity ; and shall not sleep in peace until I have made arrangements to secure to you, in binding and irrevirsible forms, a handsome income, such as liberality tells me is your due from me ; nor shall I be easy until I have, by will, made such a disposition of affairs as will prove, after my decease, how infinitely I esteemed myself indebted to you. When this business is compleated, which is essential to my enjoyment of what you have conferred upon me, I purpose setting off for Paris, to bring home

my dear child to that domestic felicity, and to those social pleasures of the world from which her virtue had made her a voluntary exile for ever.

“ Lady Herbert greets you, my dear Frederic, with maternal affection. I ardently long to introduce to her and Seraphina the author of our happiness; and they must be equally impatient to unite with me in personal acknowledgments to the highly esteemed and amiable son of my adoption. Farewell!”

LETTER THE THIRD,

*In reply to the last, addressed to the Right Hon.
Lord Viscount Herbert, &c. &c.*

“ MY DEAR LORD,

“ If any address from you could give me pain it was that which expressed obligations to me which it is impossible I can ever be sensible of having conferred, since the extraordinary favours I have, from my childhood, received from you and your’s must leave me for ever infinitely your debtor. Neither can I feel the eulogiums with

which you honour me due to that conduct, which is not superior to the common rectitude of a mind well tutored : as I owe much of the cultivation of mine to your precepts, to you should justly be attributed every action of mine in which I endeavour to emulate your virtues, which have ever set me an example of disinterestedness, noble generosity, and every moral, social, and religious duty ; in the best performance of which I can assume no merit but that of striving to copy what I have from boyhood admired in you. With respect to my conduct towards your lordship, your goodness has greatly overrated my abilities of serving you, and consequently overpaid me in feeling grateful, since all my endeavours to shew you the trivial attention your kindness to me claimed, could not be stiled the conferring any favour, but must merely be considered as a testimony of my gratitude for weighty obligations ; which, bestowed on me, without my having a single right to them, except what your benevolence chose to acknowledge, can never be repaid by me ; your claims, therefore, to my everlasting gratitude, are strong and unceasing as the benefits conferred on me are great, innumerable, and of eternal advantage.

“ To enumerate them would only be giving

pain to your noble mind, that in conferring favours wishes no recompence but the consciousness of having performed a duty in acts of disinterested beneficence. I will, therefore, dismiss the subject of my debts to you, which still remain uncanceled, because the professions of your parental regard, and that of Lady Herbert, confer on me honour and obligations too infinite to be sufficiently estimated, and that can never be repaid, even by the devotion of all my days to services beyond my power to perform.

“ With joy I vow to you both the filial allegiance of my whole life, and glory in the title of your adopted son: to call you, my lord, father, by the flattering means your indulgence would permit, would be to take advantage of your generosity, that induces you to offer an honour much above my pretensions, and far superior to my deserts. I would not, nay I cannot, put your lovely daughter to the painful trial either of rejecting the humble suitor who might be wounded by her refusal, or of accepting addresses, because sanctioned by a father, when the gift of her hand might not be accompanied by the presentation of her heart.

“ I have heard of her incomparable loveliness

from my friend O'Brien; from his animated description of her perfections I have conceived the highest admiration for Miss Herbert, and shall feel the greatest pride in considering her as my beloved sister; and evincing, by every action of my life, the attentions and solicitude of a brother for the charming daughter of a kind benefactor.

“ I shall obey your lordship's commands, and avail myself of leave of absence from quarters for a week to pay my affectionate respects to Lady Herbert, and to solicit, that I may remain, as formerly, a dependant on the generosity and affection in which I shall ever confide with the security, happiness, and gratitude, of a most obliged and attached son, glorying, at the same time, my dear lord, in the honour of subscribing myself,

“ your lordship's obedient,

“ humble servant,

“ FREDERICK WILMOT.”

The perusal of these letters inspired Seraphina with a variety of powerful emotions. The unexpected restoration of her parents to fortune, and the innumerable pleasures attendant on affluence, afforded her filial piety the highest sensa-

tions of delight, unmixed with any selfish considerations. Amidst all her joy, her heart was too amiable not to feel infinite gratitude to the author of a felicity, perfect as her affection for her parents; who, but for the noble conduct of Wilmot, would have passed a life of extreme difficulty, and suffering under the pressure of contracted circumstances.

Acquainted with the situation and character of Wilmot by her father, Seraphina had been taught to feel equal interest and regard for a spirited youth, who had, from boyhood, shewn the most uncommon virtues in a most tryingly dependant state; and her admiration of his excellent qualities had borrowed strength from the excess of her sensibility, and from the position in which Frederic had been placed by fortune. She was perfectly apprised and fully sensible, of all she owed that amiable youth on her father's account; and impressed deeply with a sense of her own obligations to the nobly generous Wilmot, she regarded him with a sister's affection, and was eager to speak his praises and her obligations, and could not resist the impulse of shewing the letters, which she thought would do more justice to the worth of Wilmot, and the sense entertained of his kindness, than any account she could give

of the benefits he had conferred on her family, and the services her father acknowledged ; persuaded, as she was, that the most elaborate eulogium she could bestow on Frederic, would not so well describe his exalted sentiments, as the words in which he had explained them.

With all the generosity, therefore, of a great soul, and all the engaging candour of a heart expanded to philanthropy and sincerity, Seraphina handed the packet to O'Brien, requesting him to read aloud intelligence which she had received, of her parents' most unexpected and extraordinary good fortune, that, she was assured, would communicate extreme pleasure to the circle of her sincere friends.

The joy that beamed in the eyes of Seraphina as she spoke of her father's happiness and the merits of Wilmot, rendered her more enchanting than ever in the estimation of Charles, whose soul, ever susceptible of the most enthusiastic sensations of friendship, rejoiced in the good fortune of his patron, the praise of his dearest friend, and the felicity of the charming maid to whom his heart was devoted.

In obedience to her request he perused the let-

ters from Lord Herbert to Seraphina and Wilmot, with his answer, which evinced equal modesty and disinterestedness. "Dear and amiable youth!" ejaculated O'Brien, "your character rises continually in my esteem and admiration!"

"Oh! my brother," cried Erina energetically, "what a noble creature is your friend!"

"He is superior to all eulogium," said Rosaline, with enthusiasm: "I have often wished to see this admirable Frederic Wilmot," she added, with a blushing smile;—"but I fear I shall never be so fortunate," continued she, after a pause, which was succeeded by a deep sigh, half suppressed.

O'Brien, who had held the letter of Wilmot for a moment in silent thoughtfulness, seemed to start to recollection; then folding up the packet, he presented it, with a trembling hand, to Seraphina, and, profoundly bowing with all the grace of sentiment, congratulated her on an unexpected turn of fortune, which he assured her, with a smile, made him suspect that the bandage, which the ancients affirmed bound the eyes of the goddess on her revolving wheel, must have slipped off, and prevented the deity from being longer

blind to merit so conspicuous as that of Miss Herbert and his beloved friend Wilmot.

Seraphina coloured deeply whilst O'Brien addressed her. The congratulatory salutations of Erina and Rosaline relieved a sensation of embarrassment equally new and undefinable to Seraphina ; whose emotion was evidently increased whilst O'Brien enlarged with enthusiasm, on the graces of Wilmot's person, address, mind, and talents. On this theme the animated Charles became as eloquent as he was warm ; and seemed, to Seraphina's imagination, to personify, in himself, the perfections his description gave to her mind's eye, as Wilmot's likeness. O'Brien spoke of Wilmot ; but the fair auditor, to whose fancy he intended to pourtray the likeness of his friend, thought only of the artist's merits, whilst contemplating the portrait he was drawing, in which she perceived no resemblance but his own. Not so Erina and Rosaline : the former was busied in drawing a parallel between her brother and his friend, in which she regarded Wilmot because of his likeness to Charles ; whilst Rosaline was engaged in lamenting, that her destiny fixed her future abode in a country where she should never have a chance of forming that acquaintance with Wilmot which had frequently been the object of

her desires ; for Rosaline, who had always admired virtue with the enthusiasm of ardent fancy, had latterly personified perfection in the ideal image of Frederic Wilmot, because he had been described to her as the most amiable of beings.

The good baronet and Mrs. O'Brien joined very sincerely both in congratulations on the fortunate event in Seraphina's favour, and in praise of Wilmot's noble conduct, although the strong claim it gave him to Miss Herbert's heart and hand seemed to threaten the frustration of Charles's dearest hopes ; but neither his parents nor he were capable of harbouring a wish in opposition to delicacy of sentiment, and those principles of morality, religion establishes as the duties of a man to his neighbour, and to his great Creator, which are too intimately connected and dependant on each other to be disunited ; since the smallest link of a chain cannot be broken, without rendering each disjointed part useless.

O'Brien's feelings were too tremblingly alive to let his heart remain one instant insensible to his own situation : he saw the demolition of the lofty fabric fancy had erected on the foundation of love ; but, in the fall of all his flattering hopes, built on the wide extended territory of joy, the

idea of the felicity within the reach of his friend consoled him for the loss of his own felicity : yet, although O'Brien's soul was exalted, his sensibility was acute ; his rectitude of mind was firm as a rock which stands amidst the tempest tossed ocean unmoved by the foamy dashing waves, that roll in swelling succession to break their fury on the flinty promontory that rears its summit unmoved by the howling blast, the thunder's roar, or the wild torrent's crash that bursts from the overflowing of the rain-swollen flood. O'Brien's resolution was fixed to the noble purposes of aiding his friend, both in his love and fortune. " Yes !" cried O'Brien, mentally, " honour points out the way which friendship must pursue ; to Wilmot I owe more than I can repay—may I perish, the scorn of virtue, if I forsake it's laws ! I swear by it never to supplant Wilmot in the affection of Seraphina ; on the contrary, I will try, by every means in my power, to encourage a union, which must constitute the felicity of beings formed for each other."

Ardent in this virtuous intention, O'Brien retired to his chamber ; where, in deep meditation on the subject of his resolves, Erina found him fixed in a touchingly pensive attitude.

His sister's approach startled the youth, who confided his generous intentions to Erina, while she melted into tears at the contemplation of her brother's disappointment and her own; for the lovely girl had long flattered herself with the hope of being indissolubly bound to her loved friend Seraphina by the endearing ties of sisterhood.

"We must not, my Erina," cried O'Brien, "desire enjoyments at the expence of principle."

"Nor do I, my brother," replied Erina, weeping; "my tears fall equally for Seraphina's situation, as our own."

"Does Seraphina grieve?" interrupted O'Brien. "Alas!" sighed he, "if she mourns, my wretchedness must be completed: but wherefore should she sorrow? Tell me, my dear Erina, the cause of Seraphina's affliction, if it be known to you, unless she have confided something to your friendship which fidelity ought not to reveal."

"What I have learned," replied Erina, "are purposes and sentiments which Seraphina has no reason to wish concealed. She has just read me her answer to her father's letter, in which,

with the usual disinterestedness of a great mind, ever ready to sacrifice individual advantage to the benefit of others, she earnestly solicits Lord Herbert, to insist on settling a handsome income on Wilmot ; adding, that as delicacy forbids her encouraging his making any addresses to her, the same sentiment must preclude her ever presenting her hand to the solicitations of any other person ; feeling, as she does, that the whole fortune Wilmot has so nobly given up, ought to revert, by right undivided, to him whom it was bequeathed to by her grandfather.—Seraphina has declared, to me,” added Erina, “ that she could never bear the idea of Wilmot continuing a dependant, or remaining in contracted circumstances, after his generous conduct to her father ; and declares her intention is immovably fixed on assuming the veil, if it should please Heaven to rob her of parents, to whom filial duty, she feels obliges her, to devote herself, while Providence spares her the blessing of their protection. Should I lose my father and mother, said Seraphina, I must then seek security and peace in religious retirement, and devotional consolation.

“ Nobly as Seraphina resolves on these measures,” continued Erina mournfully, “ I am persuaded delicacy and honour are the sole motives

to the choice of a monastic seclusion ; for the heart of my friend is formed for the social joys of domestic scenes ; her soul is, however, endowed with all the heroic virtue which is requisite to sacrifice the acute sensibility with which she is endowed, to the noble purpose of gratitude and sentiment towards Wilmot."

" You are right, my dear sister," rejoined O'Brien, " in believing Seraphina actuated by delicacy of sentiment, rather than choice, in the purpose of retiring from the world under religious vows, in case of her being left in an orphaned state. Why should she shun the scenes of life in which she is formed to shine resplendent, as well as enjoy the pleasures of the world ? and why should she doom herself to a single state of unprotected maidenhood, fitted, as she is, to draw all men captives in her chains ? The only reason of this election of a convent's gloom, and a life of celibacy, must be refinement of principle. I perceive that Wilmot and Seraphina, so formed for the happiest union, and so sensible of each other's perfections, are only severed by points of delicate honour each holds sacred in an affair of sentiment, in which both are resolved to sacrifice their individual felicity and interest to the other. Wilmot is tender, yet equally spirited and modest.

Seraphina is susceptible of the softest impressions ; but so tremblingly alive is her sensibility, she would shrink from encouraging the addresses of Wilmot after his declaration, that either their acceptance or rejection might wound his feelings.

“ I behold now, my dear Erina,” cried O’Brien, “ an opportunity for the exertion of friendship ; and I owe too much to my kind benefactor, Lord Herbert, and my generous friend Wilmot, to withhold any office that may mutually serve them. It shall be my business to effect a union between the friend of my soul and its beloved object, whose happiness is dearer to me than my own. Fortune puts it in my power to make Wilmot independent, by dividing my purse with him, as with a brother. It shall be my care to remove every obstacle of circumstance, to obviate every difficulty sentiment may erect, as a prevention to the connection of Wilmot and Seraphina, which is so much desired by Lord Herbert ; for honour and gratitude, my friendship, and even my love, urge me to every effort for the united interests and felicity of the youth, in whose protecting arms my father expired, and the daughter of my noble patron. Yes !” ejaculated Charles, emphatically, “ Wilmot shall find in me a brother ; and Seraphina shall be rescued by my exertions, from the self-

"sacrifice she meditates for the sake of Wil-
mot."

Animated by the ardour of generous enthusiasm, O'Brien's eyes sparkled as he spoke, and his heart, warmed by self-approbation, crimsoned his cheek with a glow of that soft pleasure originating from amiable sensations.

Erina looked on her brother with a smile of applause, while tears of sensibility glistened on the roseate tint of her varying complexion, that marked the different emotions of her soul, alive to the tenderest feelings. O'Brien's, strong yet calm, portrayed in his fine countenance, virtue great and triumphant over every sentiment inimical to its reign. Disappointed in the wishes of an ardent passion, at the moment when sanguine hope promised to crown his love with success, and pointed to scenes of endless joys, O'Brien's noble mind mingled neither envy nor jealousy with the idea of his rival; his friendship for Wilmot, equally exalted as his affection for Seraphina was pure, inspired the sincerest desires for their mutual felicity. Thus far rectitude of principle performed its duty, so much the more arduous and glorious as his sensibility was acute; its sighs rose not in rebellion against ho-

nour, but rather to pay an homage of obeisance to its throne, firmly established in the extended dominion of O'Brien's soul. His sighs responded to the tears of Erina, whilst he endeavoured to console her, with himself, at the prospect of repaying his obligations to the amiable Wilmot, by watching over his interests, and becoming instrumental to his independence and happiness.

O'Brien received the remuneration his generosity merited, in the peace diffused over his heart by virtuous intentions and admirable dispositions ; and, from experience, he assured Erina, that
“ The value of wealth consists alone in the power of munificent acts, and in the consciousness of employing the affluence with which Heaven entrusts us, in deeds of self-denial, to bless others ; which is the highest enjoyment riches can afford.”

CHAP. IX.

“Those disappointments which are often mourned as great misfortunes by the blind desires of mortals, religion should tell them are supreme blessings; submission ought, therefore, to consider them as ultimately such, although their advantage remain unseen, and place its confidence on that All-bounteous Hand, that dispense nothing but benefits on its creatures.

“Good is sometimes under the disguise of an evil, which never occurs, but through the misconduct of mankind.”

O'BRIEN congratulated himself that he had never avowed his love to its object, and flattered himself it had never been discovered by Seraphina, either in his looks or manner. He was aware infinite care would now be necessary to guard from her observation the situation of his mind, perturbed as it was by emotions which it would be requisite to conceal for their mutual peace. He was sensible, any material alteration in his address would attract her attention; yet to conti-

nue his accustomed assiduities, he felt must subject him to innumerable pains, and increase the difficulties of an arduous task. After much reflection on the subject of his situation, he contrived a little excursion to Flanders, in order to avoid the perilous trials to which his sensibility was every instant exposed, in an hourly intimate association with an object circumstances rendered destructive to his repose. The ostensible reason for this journey to visit a country worthy of a traveller's notice, on account of its riches, although it cannot boast any of the picturesque beauties of nature, was not altogether an excuse, for O'Brien had a desire to see every thing and place within his reach, to expand his knowledge of the world, of mankind, and their manners in different nations.

The worthy baronet and Mrs. O'Brien, apprised of all Charles's views in the excursion, rather encouraged the execution of his plan, than opposed his putting it into effect, notwithstanding they were aware of the loss his absence would occasion in their domestic circle, of which his vivacity and intelligence were the soul.

The mention of his intention to leave Paris for some weeks, caused the expression of much

regret on the part of Lady Kinross; who, with equal sincerity and innocence, mentioned her concern at the prospect of losing their "*agreeable beau*," as she always called him. Seraphina, more reserved on the subject of her regret, seemed more grieved at the anticipation of O'Brien's departure. The fair Rosaline asked a thousand questions about his going, demanded how long he would stay in Flanders, and, with her usual gaiety, requested he would soon return to cheer their circle. The beautiful Seraphina appeared afraid of venturing a single interrogation relative to the affair which visibly affected her; she merely expressed a hope, that Mr. O'Brien might not lengthen his stay in the Low Countries, so much as to prevent her parents having the pleasure of seeing him before they left Paris. A soft melancholy shaded her charming countenance; her eyes beamed sentiment, while the smile of courtesy, that usually irradiated her features whenever she spoke, seemed to borrow additional sweetness from the languor of dejection. The tones of her voice, ever charmingly modulated by the exquisite sensibility of her soul, harmonised admirably with the expression of her features, and every movement of figure that in every gesture displayed sentiment combined with grace, each giving to the other the most exquisite effect.

O'Brien's heart, alive to each evidence of delicate feeling, and open to the impression of elegance, was acutely sensible to all the various fascinations of Seraphina's countenance, figure, voice, and manner; and with her increasing charms of person, address, and influence over his soul, he found the uneasiness of his situation becoming hourly more distressing. Whenever his glances encountered her's he experienced a sensation like a shock of electricity pervading every fibre of his frame; the tones of her voice vibrated on his heart; her touch made him tremble: he found that flight was necessary, and prepared to depart as soon as possible.

After embracing his family, O'Brien advanced to bid adieu to his fair companions. Rosaline met his approach with ease, offered her hand with the frankness of an old acquaintance, and bid him farewell with the affection of a sister, while O'Brien smiled a friendly salute. On accosting the retiring Seraphina, Charles's tongue faltered an adieu, which it was impossible could be heard by her to whom timidity addressed it. O'Brien felt a chill tremor creep through all his veins; his cheeks became alternately flushed and pale; he dared not raise his eyes to Seraphina's, but bowing profoundly on her cold and tremulous hand,

which he had ventured respectfully to touch at this parting salutation, O'Brien hastily withdrew to conceal the sigh which he found it impossible to repress, when he reflected, that he was parting from an object whom he ought not again to approach until he could behold her with indifference ; which he felt was as impossible ever to attain, as it must be impracticable to avoid the presence of Seraphina, with whom his obligations, and professional connection with her father, would compel him frequently to associate.

O'Brien set out on his journey, but his thoughts remained with the beloved circle in Paris, each of whom remembered him with hourly regret.

The presence of Madame de Briançon, who returned from her summer excursion shortly after O'Brien's departure, occasioned some variety in the baronet's family, which might have been termed gay, if the hearts of all the party had been sufficiently at ease to enjoy the pleasures of dissipation. The viscountess had brought with her, from what she called her country retirement, in a succession of provincial visits, an increased relish for the amusements of a metropolis, where the business of life, and the aim of existence, seem to consist in pleasure.

In compliance with the united entreaties of Sir Phelim, Mrs. O'Brien, Erina, and Seraphina, Rosaline was to remain the guest of her friends during their stay at Paris; which Madame de Briançon endeavoured to render as agreeable as possible by soliciting their company, very frequently, to join parties of cheerful conviviality assembled at her hotel. Sir Phelim and Mrs. O'Brien were often prevailed on to mix in these societies, which Lady Kinross was always obliged to attend, in compliment to her aunt; and their invitations to Erina and Seraphina were so earnest that it would have been impossible to refuse any of them without offending against the warm friendship with which they were urged. Mrs. O'Brien would have objected to her daughter being so early engaged in the gaieties of the world in such an uninterrupted course of public amusements as Paris afforded, had she not believed her stay in that city would be short, and that an opportunity of revisiting it might not occur, to make her acquainted with a place where much may be acquired which a polite education requires.

From docility of temper, and that sweet complacency of manner so admirable in all, and so essential in youth to deck it with the most engaging charm, both Erina and Seraphina, although

each unaccustomed to large assemblies, entered into the amusements of French societies, uniting ease of address with modesty of deportment, and combining vivacity with discretion. Erina, like her friend Rosaline, was gaily sportive, even, at times, to girlish playfulness; but in the utmost height of frolicsome spirits, the most delicate reserve of virgin timidity enveloped them in a veil of purity, sufficient to awe the most determined libertine into respect for maiden chastity, guarded unconsciously by its own immaculate innocence, whilst void of any suspicion that it could be offended.

Seraphina, now free from any uneasiness of circumstance, felt the cheerfulness natural to youth; and might have been inspired to gaiety, had not her feeling heart, from long subjugation to sadness, acquired a habit of suppressing, instead of yielding to exhilaration: the placidity of her temper, the serenity of her mind, and the recent amelioration of her situation, made her feel happy; and, in the peace of her soul, she often gave way to the smile of mirth, in spite of an internal sensation, which chastened that expression of gaiety excited by the cheerful scenes around her. Frequently, whilst joining in the laugh enjoyment paid as a just tribute to the brilliant wit of those who enlivened the *petits soupers* of the

Viscountess Briançon, a tear rose to the eyes of Seraphina, who was ignorant of the source whence it sprang.

Equally admired with her two friends, she mixed in the dance, and was daily loaded with the adulation of elegant compliments from the most polished youths of Paris ; but Seraphina thought, with Rosaline, that the courtesy of a sincere Briton was infinitely more gratifying to the understanding, and more touching to the feelings, than the most refined gallantry of the best bred Parisian beaux.

Erina, younger than her two associates, received her portion of admiration and soft attentions from a train of adorers, amongst whom the young St. Amand, son to the count, and cousin to Rosaline, distinguished Erina with the most assiduous homage.

The chevalier, heir to his father's title and fortune, was amiable and handsome. Although affianced, according to the mode of his country, where alliances are formed by parents for their children on motives of interest, the youth's susceptible heart was unconscious of any criminality in admitting the liveliest admiration of Erina,

notwithstanding he had been betrothed to Mademoiselle la Fontaine, youngest daughter to the duke of that name.

Antoinette had beauty and amiable dispositions, and although without any portion, being the youngest of a numerous family, the Count St. Amand had been induced to listen to the duke's overtures for his daughter's union with the chevalier, whom it was in his power to serve. The match thus concerted by the fathers was soon to take place. The youth, in consequence, had paid his *devoirs*, in form, by the rules of *etiquette*, without his affections being at all engaged in the business of courtship; but the young maiden, just released from the seclusion of a convent, where she had been educated, had not received with indifference the addresses of the first lover who had paid her the homage of gallantry. Antoinette's heart was awakened to a sensation of the tender passion, and she regarded the chevalier not merely as her future husband, but as a man whom she really loved.

Mademoiselle la Fontaine was, amongst the companions of the three friends, one most admired by each of them. Seraphina, Rosaline, and Erina, discovered in Antoinette a great de-

grée of sensibility, combined with that volatility which is the character of the French nation. She, on her part, caressed with affection *les trois belles Angloises*, as they were called in the circle of their acquaintance at Paris; and, with all the freedom of her country, the simplicity of girlishness, and the innocence of a heart delighting in the prospect of a virtuous attachment, confided all her sentiments of admiration, and love for the chevalier, to each of her three intimate associates.

Seraphina's soul, gifted with those acute feelings which constitute the most exquisite sensibility, delighted in contemplating the happiness of the charmingly vivacious Antoinette. Rosaline, equally amiable and tender as her two friends, participated with them in their enjoyment of Antoinette's perspective of felicity with the youth of her affection; and without the least envy of her agreeable situation, could not avoid drawing, occasionally, a comparison between the state of Mademoiselle la Fontaine and her own circumstances, much to the advantage of the former.

The hotel of the Count St. Amand presented a continual scene of festivity; and the intended bride of his son was, according to etiquette, the

nymph of every *fête*: that ceremony which constituted Antoinette the goddess of the chevalier's first attentions, was never transgressed by his politeness, so that it would have required greater sagacity in the affairs of love and gallantry than any of the female party possessed, to have discovered the secret of St. Amand's heart, perhaps as yet concealed from himself, that there were in it the seeds of an unfortunate passion springing up, which, like a noisome weed, would require to be eradicated, since it threatened to lay waste a soil where nature had intended the flowers of virtue should flourish.

Frequently, whilst the chevalier joined in the dance with his destined bride, who, with all the liveliness of her years and nation, enjoyed the sprightly mazes of a cotillion, Rosaline's thoughts would revert to former times, when, in her native isle, she had tripped the measures of an English country dance, or the more mirth-inspiring steps of the Caledonian reel. "Then," cried Rosaline mentally, "I too was blessed in the bosom of my friends and country; now separated from all the acquaintance of my deceased family, who had known and regarded me from infancy, and on whom my first affections had been bestowed,—and exiled, for ever, from a land of

freedom and happiness, a soil beloved as my native place, I am doomed to live, for the remainder of my days, in constant regret of those which are past ; now in a foreign kingdom, surrounded by associates, differing in religion, language, habits, and even in opinions and ideas from my own, I am destined to pass the rest of my life, deprived, perhaps, of all that can attach me to ' it, or render the world tolerable to me !"

Sighs, deep-drawn, and tears, with difficulty suppressed, often accompanied these secret lamentations of the amiable Rosaline, too much endowed with sensibility not to feel and grieve over her situation ; and, at the same time too, delicately refined in her ideas to discover her unhappiness, either to the friends who would sympathise too tenderly in her constant regrets, or to those near connections, or new companions, who might be wounded by the decided and strong preference she gave to former ties, and her native country.

Rosaline, however, knew too well the duty of contentment in the situation in which it pleases Heaven to place mortals, to murmur at the lot an all-wise Deity had destined for her ; and whilst her heart felt the trials of her condition,

her reason was convinced, that every event being under the direction of consummate wisdom, must be right. Thus rationally and piously persuaded, she endeavoured to submit to her circumstances with cheerfulness, and anticipated a speedy acquisition of perfect contentment, under the most trying events, from the certainty, that such dispositions of dependance on the Supreme Power, and perfect submission to the Divine Will, could not fail to ensure her the support of grace, and the guidance and blessing of Providence.

“How sweetly consolatory is religion!” thought Rosaline; “surely it can ease all sufferings when it can sooth those of my heart! I will not, then, fear the occurrences which may happen to me; I must no longer mourn the relations of whose care Heaven has robbed me—no, my father, I trust, rests in the bosom of his Creator; my mother has been removed from the woes of life to the enjoyments of eternity; my grandsire and my last kind maternal parent, Lady Elizabeth, whose tenderness fostered my infant and orphaned state, are gone to taste the rewards of their virtues; and, oh! may those sentiments they endeavoured to instil into my mind, preserve me from impious repining, because my situation, in many particu-

lars, so much better than I merit, is not, in all points, exactly what my blind and foolish fancy might desire."

Such mental prayers frequently composed the mind of Rosaline, at moments when her tender feelings were most awakened to the sufferings of sensibility, by circumstances, which hourly excited in her soul its faculties of retrospection and anticipation, that no resolution can suppress, whilst memory and reflection hold their offices in the intellect to review past scenes, foresee the future probable events, and compare the present with antecedent time.

The period appointed by the Viscount de Briangon for his visit to Paris was now approaching ; and the expectation of his speedy arrival, frequently caused great emotion in the heart of Rosaline. She knew, that by the established custom of France, her aunt might assume a power of uniting her to her cousin, however averse either might be to the other ; and the delicacy of a young English girl, which Lady Kinross possessed in an eminent degree, made her shudder at the idea of marrying a man, whom she perhaps could never regard ; and who, probably, might ever be indifferent about her. The means, how-

ever, of avoiding a fate, apparently most dreadful to her refined feelings, seemed impracticable to Rosaline, whose only remaining relations claimed those rights over her which the laws of their country admitted.

Her amiable disposition made her revere in Madame de Briangon, and in the Count St. Amand, the representatives of her father; and out of respect to the idea of that sacred title, although she had no recollection of that parent, she regarded those whose near affinity to him had made them near relations to herself; but, notwithstanding Rosaline's high notions of the ties consanguinity forms, and her reverence of the duties it imposes, she experienced not for her uncle or aunt those warm affections her heart had imbibed in infancy and cherished to maturity for her maternal relations.

Whilst Madame de Briangon was anticipating with joy the arrival of her son, she had already commenced some preparations at her hotel to receive Lady Kinross as the viscount's bride; while the fair maid herself felt like a prisoner under sentence of death, and looked forward with horror to the time of her marriage, as the hour of a most dreadful execution.

In spite of all her natural fortitude, and her efforts to increase it by every support pious resignation could afford, the perturbed state of Rosaline's mind evinced itself in a dejection of spirits, and an alteration of appearance, which awakened the apprehension of her friends for her health and happiness. The tender Seraphina and Erina perceived, with pain, that smiles had forsaken the lips of Rosaline, and that the rose's blush no longer tinted her cheek. Constantly with their loved companion, Lady Kinross, and more observant of her than ever, they marked, with anxiety, sighs frequently stealing from her bosom, and a tear fall in silence ; and their solicitude to know the cause of her sadness was too warmly expressed, to fail in affecting a heart inspired with the softest emotions of friendship, and ever alive to its assiduities.

Rosaline, after being frequently interrogated respecting the subject of her grief, and vainly endeavouring to hide her agitation, increased by the tender solicitude of Seraphina and Erina, most touchingly expressed by both, wept at the idea of having caused them the uneasiness they testified ; and under the impression, that concealed sorrows are, in general, more afflicting to the silent sufferer, and to those, who sympathising in woes of which they knew neither the cause nor extent,

are led to believe them greater and more terrible than they really are, Rosaline resolved to let her two dear friends into the secret of her heart; and discovered to them, without the least reserve, all the sentiments that affected her mind, with an increasing sensation of misery.

“ I was not thoroughly sensible of my attachment to my native isle,” said Rosaline, mournfully, “ till I quitted it for ever; nor did I know how much I should feel an eternal exile from it, until I experienced the pain of relinquishing for life the country of my birth, the acquaintance of my infancy, and the habits which have become my nature. In this kingdom I must ever feel an alien, like the poor African, who, transplanted into a strange region, spends a melancholy existence in hourly lamenting the natal home from which he has been dragged, and weeping over the remembrance of those associates from whose embraces he has been torn !

“ I feel,” continued Rosaline, “ that the longer I live in France, it will become more disagreeable to me. The manners and character of its inhabitants are totally uncongenial with mine; and the nearer I approach an apparently unavoidable union, which will naturalize me here, the more

I feel shocked at the prospect of connecting myself with the viscount. Although he is nearly related to me, and I hear he is handsome and amiable, yet my heart revolts at the idea of devoting myself to one whom, instead of regarding, I may dislike. Alas ! how unfortunate am I to have been born and educated in England, since my lot is to live in a country where the heart is deemed the happy privilege every Briton enjoys by right, of forming connections, or rejecting them, according to the choice of sentiment, unshackled by the restraint of interested views, which are the only motives of alliances in France !”

The mournful tones in which Rosaline spoke, and the fixed dejection depicted in her countenance, affected the gentle Erina and the warmly feeling Seraphina most deeply ; and their sorrow admitted of no consolation, as they knew not how to administer any to the suffering girl, from whose unhappy state there seemed no retreat, and in which there appeared the strongest reason to fear increasing misery.

Seraphina, in silent sympathy, mingled her tears with Rosaline's ; while Erina encircled both her beloved companions in friendship's kindest embrace, and, fixing her humidly beaming eyes on those of Lady Kinross, said, in softest accents

of affectionate commiseration, “ May all the balm religion can infuse into the pious mind, assuage the sufferings of your’s, my dear and amiable Rosaline !”

“ Thank you, my sweet Erina !” ejaculated her friend—“ Oh ! how much consolation shall I require from devotion to reconcile me to a hapless fate. If, in the arms of friendship, my tears flow at the bare anticipation of events, how much more must I grieve when the dreaded events have actually occurred ; when the solemn engagement, that is to bind me to live and die in this country, is confirmed ; when indissolubly united to the viscount, I find myself neither attached to him nor regarded by him ; when surrounded by scenes uninteresting to me, crouds of beings indifferent to me ; when I shall look around in vain for the friends of my soul, and whilst mourning the loss of Seraphina and Erina, I shall not see even one native of my country about me,—then, indeed, my situation will be melancholy ! Retrospection will then be at once my misery and its sole consolation. Oh ! my friends, my heart sinks in despair at the idea, that even my last hour will be unblest by the consolation requisite to its peace, since no minister of the Protestant faith will be at hand to comfort me in my dying moments

with the sublime offices of the English church, to which I shall ever adhere; and when I have breathed my last sigh, my dust will moulder in a foreign soil—divided, even in death, from my native land, and the remains of that dear mother at whose bosom I was nurtured, and near whose tomb I should wish mine to be raised!”

A burst of anguish convulsed the delicate frame of Rosaline, while her friends mingled their sighs and tears with her's.

After a few moment's indulgence of sorrow, Mademoiselle la Fontaine was announced, and her presence checked a grief sympathy would have prolonged, but which civility found it requisite to controul.

It was only in secret, and occasionally, that Lady Kinross yielded to any expression of the affliction, which, “like a worm i'the bud, preyed on her damask cheek;” but when in company, the sweetness of her temper, and the delicate courtesy of her manner, prevented her acquaintance from remarking a dejection visible only to the assiduous observation of tender friendship.

The arrival of Lord and Lady Herbert, now varied the scene at Paris in the baronet's family.

On account of the short time his lordship had allotted for his stay in the metropolis of France, as the winter was advancing, when his presence would be required in London, it was contrary to his plan to enter into the gaieties of Paris, or even to form any new acquaintance there, except Sir Phelim's family; whose attentions to Seraphina had been too much dwelt on by her gratitude to fail of awakening it in the bosom of her parent, where every amiable sentiment found a place. A deep sense of obligation to every member of a family who had evinced such friendship to a child most tenderly beloved by her father and mother, induced a regard, on their part, which was most cordially returned by the baronet, his daughter, and Erina. Their hearts, ever open to all the warm feelings that enoble human nature, gave an interest to their manners, that at the first interview engaged the affection of congenial minds. Lord and Lady Herbert were charmed by the easy urbanity of the silver-haired grandsire, whose politeness was evidently the benevolence of the kindest nature, directed by the most perfect knowledge of the best society. The soft courtesy of Mrs. O'Brien's address also, made its due impression on her noble visitors, whose affectionate hearts bestowed on the two lovely friends of their daughter, a love propor-

tioned to that they felt for an only child, dear to their souls as her merits entitled her to be.

Lord Herbert procured an elegant suite of apartments in a hotel near Sir Phelim's lodgings ; and from a wish to cultivate the acquaintance of the baronet's family, his lordship requested to be honoured with their company daily during his stay at Paris. An invitation made with the most cordial politeness was accepted with pleasure ; and as it continually united the party *en famille*, the joy Seraphina experienced on being, for the first time in her life, domesticated with her parents, and openly acknowledged by them, was not diminished by her ceasing to be the inmate of Sir Phelim's family, since they became the constant guests of Lord and Lady Herbert.

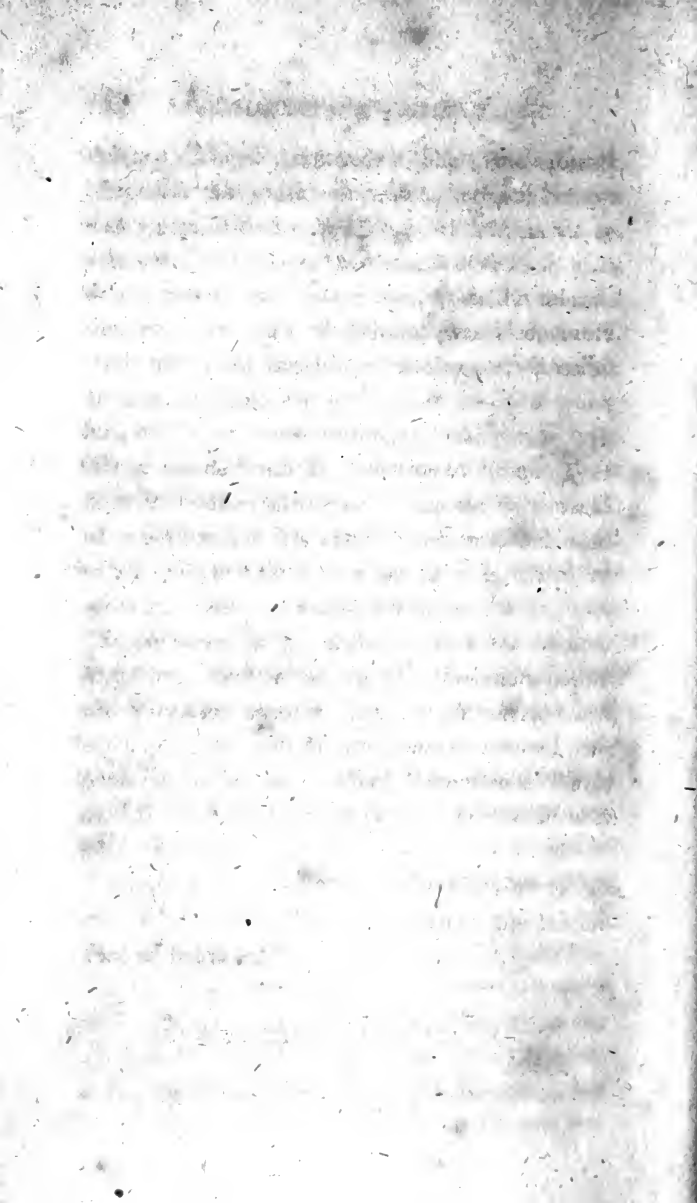
Impressed with the most favourable ideas of their characters, Erina received infinite delight in a personal acquaintance with beings whose virtues she had so much admired. A familiarity with the extraordinary events of their lives, in which Rosaline had so often been deeply interested made her consider them as old friends, whom she was highly gratified in meeting. Her ideas she found had not at all exaggerated the merits of Seraphina's parents ; in a daily increasing intimacy with whom, Lady Kinross perceived the

innumerable fine qualities her lively imagination expected to find in Lord and Lady Herbert. Rosaline was only disappointed in one thing on their arrival. She had flattered herself, yet she knew not why, that Wilmot might accompany them to France. She had dwelt so much on the hope, that it became at length an expectation, in the frustration of which she was seriously affected, although she endeavoured to reason herself into its absurdity. "Wherefore should I desire to see Frederic Wilmot," thought Rosaline, "if to behold him would follow as an inevitable consequence, according to my opinion, that I should love him as I now admire him? Then, most assuredly, I am fortunate in the disappointment I lament; for is not Wilmot destined for Seraphina? and would it not be criminal in me to admit a passion his ties and my engagement must condemn as immoral, because it is illegitimate, if not in law, at least in religion, whose obligations are equally sacred to the heart, as legal institutions are binding to the person."

Thus convinced by a cool investigation of a subject she had not before trusted herself to analyze, lest her ideas might embody themselves in sentiment, Rosaline resolved to banish all thoughts her awakened delicacy now judged improper to

be any longer admitted. The fancy-formed image of the youth, in which her imagination had personified the perfection of human virtue, could not, however, be banished from a mind ever intent on virtuous actions, with the admiration of those, that of Wilmot was inseparable. And, instead of lamenting his absence, Rosaline became daily more rejoiced her wish of seeing him had never been gratified; feeling now convinced of the truth of a sentiment difficult, perhaps impossible, to be proved, except by a species of experiment which must be denominated a negative one, that *those disappointments which are often mourned as great misfortunes only by the blind desires of mortals, religion should tell them are supreme blessings: submission ought, therefore, to consider them as ultimately such, although their advantage remain unseen; and place its confidence on that all-bounteous Hand, that dispenses nothing but benefits on its creatures.*

Good is sometimes under the disguise of an evil, which never occurs but through the misconduct of mankind.





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